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P227440X

**Corporate Parenting:
The Contribution of
Designated Teachers**

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

2006

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores issues concerning the education of young people in public care and some of the national initiatives that have been introduced to redress the difficulties experienced by this group; issues are within the broad area of social inclusion.

The research was designed to explore the impact of the introduction of the designated teacher role in a small sample of schools in one authority (Shiretown) and the contribution of the role to corporate parenting of young people who are looked after. It was a study over two and a half years, employing case study methodology.

There is a review of the relevant literature on the education of children in public care, multi-agency working, attachment and resilience theories, the roles of the school and teachers and alternative educational provision at Key Stage 4. Following this, data are presented from initial interviews with designated teachers in a small sample of secondary schools within one local education authority and from an initial survey of social workers with whom these teachers might be working. Case studies are reported, together with contextual details, to identify examples of effective collaboration or non-collaboration between Social Services and schools, focusing on the role of the designated teacher. This is examined alongside quantitative data in the form of GCSE/SATs results, as required by the Government, to indicate improvement in the educational experience of looked after children. Data are presented from interviews with a sample of young people in the schools in the study to gain their perceptions of the impact of the contribution of those involved in corporate parenting to their educational experiences.

At the end of the study period, designated teachers and social workers were again interviewed and data are presented to demonstrate changes in perceptions and practice, as a result of the introduction of the initiatives to improve the

educational experiences and attainment of looked after children. Following a thorough analysis of the findings, recommendations are made for effecting further improvement and areas of further research.

A study of the contribution of designated teachers to corporate parenting for Shiretown's population of young people in public care.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Research on the education of looked after children indicates that a significant improvement in their education outcomes can only be achieved through truly collaborative working between education and social services.” (Jackson and Sachdev, 2001, p.15)

This section provides a context for the study and establishes the ‘real world’ problem it sets out to address.

Following concerns raised in the mid-1980s (Jackson, 1987), the education of young people in public care is accommodated within the government's later social inclusion agenda, with this group having been widely identified as a group that under-achieved in the education system. This was evidenced by figures of 75 per cent of care leavers having left formal education with no qualifications, and only 12-19 per cent going on to further education compared with 68 per cent of the general population (DfEE/DoH, 2000). Although these figures were derived from a small sample and, therefore, should be viewed with some caution in terms of statistical robustness, the gap demonstrated between the academic achievements of looked after children and the general population was so large that the difference would be significant even if it had been exaggerated by sampling error.

In any local authority looked after children/young people constitute a tiny percentage of the population of children and young people (about 0.5 per cent) (SEU, 2003). Not surprisingly, this statistic is mirrored in the vast majority of schools, so that it would be surprising if more than one percent of the pupils are in

public care. However, nationally 60,000 children are looked after at any one time (SEU, 2003). This is a significant group that has been identified as being at high risk of social exclusion. Education is seen as being integral to improving the life chances of young people in public care.

To redress the situation, the Office for Standards in Education and the Social Services Inspectorate collaborated to produce a report (Ofsted/SSI, 1995). This unprecedented collaboration highlighted the need for both agencies to be involved. However, by the late 1990s, it was recognised that little, if any, improvement had been made to the educational achievement of this group. This prompted the publication of the Government's "Quality Protects": Framework for Action" (DoH, 1998) documentation, which set local authorities objectives to improve their service for looked after children, one of which was specifically related to education/training:

"Children looked after gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities ..." (DoH, 1998, Objective 4).

The term 'corporate parenting' is used to describe the collective responsibility of the whole local authority to achieve good parenting. The origins of the term are obscure but Jackson and Sachdev (2001) identified that in its current form it can be traced to a National Children's working party, chaired by Roy Parker, in the late 1970's. The Government's expectation was that corporate parents were expected "to do what any good parent would do" (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 13). It was also identified that those involved in 'corporate parenting' had lower aspirations for, and expectations of, looked after children than for the general population of school children, in terms of both behaviour and achievement.

Since the introduction of "Quality Protects", further DfEE/DoH initiatives have been introduced. In 2000, the "Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care" (2000) was implemented. This circular recommended that –

- 1) Protocols were to be established to ensure exchange of relevant data;

- 2) Schools were each to appoint a “designated teacher” for looked after children who would be required to be “an advocate ..., accessing services and support, and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations ...” (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 32). In effect, someone to “champion” these pupils in the school. (See Appendix 1 for extract of Guidance on designated teachers)
- 3) Personal education plans to be developed for every looked after child.

It had been recognised that to effect improvement to the educational performance of looked after young people there was a requirement to establish “joined up” working practices with the agencies involved with looked after children -

“The Government’s Response to the Children’s Safeguards Review has made it clear that it is a ‘joined up’ issue requiring ‘joined up’ solutions.” (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p.4)

To achieve this, there was the recognition that -

“ ... the educational history of looked after children suggests that effective multi-agency collaboration doesn’t just happen. There needs to be someone providing the link between agencies ...” (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p.23).

For this multi-agency collaboration to happen, it would appear that there was recognition that the person providing the conduit for schools would be the designated teacher for young people in public care. The effectiveness of the role of designated teacher would be examined through the schools’ Ofsted inspection process. Local authorities had been set targets to improve the educational attainments of the young people in their public care and would be judged against these. To progress this, many local authorities established dedicated posts. In 1999 (*i.e.* prior to the publication of Guidance), I was appointed to such a post – Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children in Shiretown Borough Council.

The anticipated result of improved, effective collaboration between agencies was an enhancement in the educational experience of looked after pupils. This study was designed to explore the impact of the introduction of the designated teacher role in a small sample of schools in one authority (Shiretown Borough Council). It attempts to identify indicators of effective collaboration between Social Services and schools, focusing on the role of the designated teacher.

This study should be of interest to those employed in posts similar to mine in other local authorities and to designated teachers in every school. In fact, given that the Government believed that –

“Getting it right for young people in public care is about getting it right for all children -” (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p.3)

this piece of research may be of interest to any education professional concerned with improving the educational experiences and outcomes of young people, particularly those who are failing to realise their potential.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although recognised as a very real world problem, whilst there is little literature on the topic of the education of looked after children, there is a wealth of literature that explores dimensions of the issue. Therefore, in this chapter there is an exploration of several streams that would indicate causes of difficulties and the efficacy of interventions suggested to overcome them. This literature review examines the relevant streams and attempts to provide a theoretical framework for examination of the core question–

Does the role of designated teacher, as conducted in the sample schools, contribute to effective corporate parenting for Shiretown’s cohort of young people in public care?

The education of children/young people in public care

This section examines the difficulties that have been identified around the education of young people in public care. This –

“... is an area where there is remarkable and rare consensus among researchers, policy makers, practitioners and importantly, young people themselves, about the central issues.” (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 2004, p. ii)

Pre-care experiences of looked after children can go some way to explaining their educational under-achievement, in that there is an established link between social disadvantage and poor educational performance (see, for example, Ofsted, 2000b; McCallum and Demie, 2001; Whithear, 1995; Bell, 2003) and children from families who are socially disadvantaged are more likely to become looked after (Harker *et al.*, 2004b). Some were already labelled as ‘failures’ in the education system prior to becoming looked after. Vernon and Sinclair (1998) commented that being out of school was a significant contributing factor to the breakdown in relationships with their family for many adolescents who subsequently became

looked after. However, whilst pre-care disadvantage can provide some explanation, it is not the only factor.

“... certain structural features of the care and education systems can lead to impoverished education opportunities and experiences for the looked after populations.” (Harker *et al.*, 2004b, p.5)

It is the complex interaction of cognitive ability, pre-care experiences and factors in the care system that militate against educational achievement that make this group of young people so vulnerable. Corporate parents have a responsibility to eliminate the negative factors in the care system and to compensate for the factors that arise from pre-care experiences.

Education has been recognised as being of crucial importance to all children, not only in terms of their learning but also in socialisation, including establishing appropriate relationships with both adults and peers, thus enabling them to form and maintain friendships (Fletcher-Campbell, 1997). For looked after children there is the additional benefit that school can offer some normality in their lives, in that it can provide some stability at a time when other aspects of their lives are changing and ‘fragmented’ and can provide the opportunity for them to be treated as ‘ordinary’ pupils and learners (Fletcher-Campbell and Hall, 1990). The Community Education Development Centre’s (CEDC) report (2001) considered that whilst schools could provide this positive experience, they could also be a –

“... lottery for the young person in public care. It can be a place to be normal, to make friends and to succeed. But because of ineffective communication, it can also be a place where bullying, intrusive questioning, low expectations and discrimination are rife.” (CEDC, 2001, p. 10)

It had been recognised that young people who were not living consistently at home often had frequent changes of care placement which could entail changes of school (Fletcher-Campbell, 1997). Also young people who were looked after frequently had poor attendance records. Both of these factors could militate

against them having full access, not only to the educational curriculum, but to careers advice, sex education and other services provided by the school.

Subsequently, there was emerging data about the relationship between school attendance and pupil attainment (Minister of State for School Standards, 2004).

Admission into the care system had frequently been accompanied by a change of school (see, for example, DfEE/DoH, 2000; SEU, 2003). One study identified that a change of school set children back by ten months, in terms of their learning (Henderson, 2001). For those involved in corporate parenting, the challenge then is to engage their looked after young people in education and keep the school placement stable.

Government initiatives have given some prominence and importance to the education of looked after children in an attempt to improve the educational experiences of this group (see, for example, DfE, 1994; DoH, 1998; DfEE/DoH, 2000). Since the mid-1980s there has been the recognition that, as a group, looked after children and young people massively under-achieve in the education system. Although as early as 1976, Essen *et al.* (1976), through the use of the National Child Development Study data, commented that children who had been in care performed poorly in comparison to others in the population, it was another 11 years before the seminal research in this field was undertaken by Sonia Jackson, when she identified the lack of work in this area (Jackson, 1987). Following this, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) undertook the first national study in 1988/9. This project investigated not only local authorities' policies, practices and resources but also the effects of these on the educational experiences of individual children in care (Fletcher-Campbell and Hall, 1990). One of the recommendations made in this study was about liaison and collaboration between different departments in local authorities and suggested that –

“Wherever possible, the necessary expertise should be drawn together to discuss a particular issue rather than the issue being confined within ... inappropriate boundaries.” (Fletcher-Campbell and Hall, 1990, p. 168)

Utting (1991) and Warner (1992) both identified difficulties in education for looked after young people. Partly in response to these two reports, the Government published the Circular 13/94 (DfE, 1994) that highlighted some of the difficulties experienced in education by this group of children/young people. It identified several areas of concern, including –

- i. carers not giving sufficient priority to education (para 17) and
- ii. children/young people being bullied or stigmatized because of their looked after status, which could result in truancy or low achievement (Circular 13/94, para. 13).

The Circular recognized the strong and beneficial effect that school could have on increasing life chances of looked after young people and the opportunities for having the same experiences as other children (DfE, 1994). This Circular emphasized the need for change in both thinking and practice, as had Fletcher-Campbell and Hall (1990).

Young people in care “fall down the gap” between social work and education (Jackson, 1987). In an attempt to redress this, the Social Service Inspectorate (SSI) and Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) collaborated to produce a report (1995) about the education of this vulnerable group. The 1995 report stated that both local education authorities (LEAs) and Social Service Departments (SSDs) were failing to promote the educational achievement of children/young people in their care. One of the identified causes of this was that those involved in corporate parenting (social workers, carers, parents and schools) had not established responsibilities and roles around the education of the young people. In addition, liaison between these parties was not always consistent, if happening at all, resulting in unsatisfactory co-ordination and planning for individual children (Ofsted/SSI, 1995). In terms of underachievement, the report identified that within the sample of looked after children/young people studied:

- (i) Attendance was an issue, with over a quarter of 14-16 year olds being classified as poor attenders or excluded from school;
- (ii) Over 75% of looked after school leavers had no formal qualifications;

- (iii) Only one third of secondary aged young people achieved levels in line with the general population of the same age, and
- (iv) Whilst 68% of the general population of young people went into further education after statutory schooling, only 20% of looked after children, within the sample, did. (SSI and Ofsted, 1995)

One of the report's conclusions was that, to achieve improvements in standards of educational achievement of looked after young people, schools had to undertake, together with the local education authority, a greater responsibility for establishing and maintaining partnership with Social Services Departments. To facilitate this, one of the report's recommendations was that schools should have a named person responsible for looked after pupils. Fletcher-Campbell (1997), reporting a 12-month research project that examined what was happening in respect of the education of looked after young people in 1996, stated that there was no evidence that there had been wide implementation of the recommendation for schools to have designated teachers.

Even with the information and recognition of the problem emerging from the Circular 13/94 (DfE, 1994), it was several years before the Government determined that local authorities had to address the difficulties experienced by children in the looked after system. This followed Sir William Utting's Report, *People Like Us*, which showed serious failings in the management and delivery of children's services (Utting, 1997). With the introduction of "Quality Protects: Transforming Children's Services" (DoH, 1998) in September 1998, local authorities were charged with:

"... (having) a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of support that any good parent would give to their children. ... The underlying message for you ... is straightforward: you should do your utmost to make sure that children in public care get a good start in life." (DoH letter to Councillors, 21 September 1998)

The “Quality Protects: Framework for Action” (DoH, 1998) initiative set local authorities objectives to improve their service for looked after children, one of which was specifically related to education/training in that it was about looked after children gaining maximum life chances from education. Quantitative indicators were identified to measure the improvements. These were concerned with end of key stage assessments (SATs) results and GCSE results, attendance figures and numbers of 16+ young people continuing in education or training.

Local authorities had been criticised for not knowing what “any good parent would” about the educational achievements and/or difficulties of the young people for whom they were corporate parents (DoH, 1998). Research had also identified that those involved in corporate parenting had lower aspirations for, and expectations of, looked after children than for the general population of school pupils, both in terms of behaviour and achievement (DOH, 1998).

Jackson (2000) commented that there has been a tendency consistently to underestimate the resilience of children in care, even though research showed that, given opportunities, these young people had the potential to achieve as well as others. She identified that this had been attributable to a lack of cohesion and collaboration between the relevant agencies involved.

There have been varied responses by local authorities to attempt to react to the Government’s targets and establish ‘joined up’ working practices with the agencies involved with looked after children. Since the introduction of Quality Protects (DoH, 1998), further DfEE/DoH initiatives have been introduced to address the educational needs of looked after children. The Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DoH, 2000) not only recognised that multi-agency collaboration was needed to effect some improvement but also identified that for such collaboration to occur, there needed to be someone providing the link between agencies and implementing joint initiatives (DfEE/DoH, 2000). The guidance recommended schools to appoint a designated teacher for looked after children who would be required to be –

“... an advocate ..., accessing services and support, and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations ...” (p.32)

In effect, the designated teacher was someone to ‘champion’ these pupils in the school (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 32). The guidance also required that every looked after child had a personal education plan which –

“ ... ensures access to services and support; minimizes disruption and broken schooling; signals particular and special needs; establishes clear goals and acts as a record of progress and achievement.” (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 28)

In July 2002 the Department of Health’s Public Service Agreement (PSA) included new targets for the education of looked after young people, viz:

By 2006, to have substantially narrowed the gap between the educational attainment and participation of children in care and that of their peers, to be achieved by:

- Outcomes in English and maths to have been at least 60 per cent as good as those of peers;
- Proportion of those disengaging from education reduced, so that no more than 10 per cent reached school leaving age without having sat a GCSE equivalent exam; and
- The proportion of those who were aged 16 who got qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs grades A*-C to have risen on average by four percentage points each year since 2002; and in all authorities at least 15 per cent of young people in care to have achieved this level of qualification.

The Social Exclusion Unit (2003) published the findings of a large-scale research survey on issues around the education of looked after children. Given that this

work emanated from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, it illustrated the political priority being put on this issue. The conclusions of the research again highlighted poor academic achievement, low levels of attendance, low expectations of carers, social workers and teachers and education not being prioritised in care planning. The report quoted that, in terms of achievement, only eight per cent of 16 year olds who had spent at least one year in care in 2001 achieved five A*-C grades at GCSE, compared to half of all young people. There was the caveat that this figure should be viewed with caution as DfES data for the general population covered pupils in Year 11, whilst DoH data looked at care leavers who may have been 16, 17 or 18 years old.

The report again highlighted the difficulty of 'joined-up' working because social workers and teachers could lack understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities and have different working patterns. There was consensus about the difficulties experienced by looked after children and the impact that these had on their academic achievement, the causality and the changes to practice necessary to attempt to effect improvement, *i.e.* effective collaboration of those involved in corporate parenting.

The need for the 'joined up' working between agencies would appear to have been supported by a study undertaken by Coulling (2000) to find out how those working across agency boundaries could be helped to develop a shared understanding of what counted as successful practice for each agency in relation to the education of 'looked after' children. Using Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Psychology as a tool to explore this, the researcher interviewed professionals and children, to explore understanding of a common goal. The study identified that the role of the school was of major importance, as was the ability of the teachers to understand the needs of the looked after child. Young people specifically stated that they wanted the school and their carers to be in close touch to prevent things 'going wrong'. The study also showed that close liaison demonstrated to the young person that their education was valued by and important to the carer (Coulling, 2000). Coulling (2000) also identified that the ethos of the school was important in that the schools most likely to provide effective education for foster children were ones with good pastoral support, good interdepartmental liaison and good

liaison with foster carers. What was notable, in the study, was that successful educational experiences had –

“ ... little to do with academic ability but more to do with being well supported by carer and school to reach potential.”
(Coulling, 2000, p.33)

This would appear to confirm what Gilligan (1997) identified as important:

“ ... making the child feel cared about rather than cared for.”
(Gilligan, 1997, p.14)

Whilst it was clear that there was a need for joined-up working and establishing multi-agency collaboration to bring about an improvement in the educational experience and achievement of looked after young people, it was also clear that this could be difficult to achieve. This was evidenced by the fact that it had not happened in response to earlier suggestions from Government, as contained in Circular LAC 13/94 (DoH, 1994) and SSI/Ofsted Report (1995). For looked after children, multi-agency working is embedded in the concept of corporate parenting. This concept is examined in the following section.

Corporate parenting

Frank Dobson, the first Minister for Health in the Labour government elected in 1997, encapsulated the essence of the concept of “corporate parenting” as follows:

“We have a special responsibility to young people who are in care or who have left care. As their corporate parent we owe them a special duty. I am determined that young people living in and leaving care will in the future get the same support, as far as possible, as other young people who are living at home and leaving home.” (DH, 1999: 5)

The whole concept of corporate parenting can be seen as a contradiction, in that parenting is ideally undertaken by one or two individuals who are committed to the care of a child/young person. If this care is to be corporate, it will inevitably

involve a range of people and that will involve difficulties in communication, shared ideas/visions, etc. Looked after young people do not have one parent/ person doing everything, which is so often essential to avoid them falling down the 'gaps' between services, which had been identified as disadvantaging them (Jackson, 1987) and was one of the areas that corporate parenting was intended to address.

Since 1997, the Labour government's social policy has made a priority of tackling *social exclusion*. A focus on such exclusion differs both from traditional class politics and from new right conceptions of the "underclass", in that it is not concerned to radically alter general social structure but examines exclusionary processes at the meso or micro level, rather than at the macro level. Thus it avoids focusing on individual behaviour and instead focuses on structural processes (Goddard, 2003). The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was formed to undertake work in this area. The SEU focused considerable attention on children and children in care and care leavers quickly became central to their reform agenda. This was illustrated by the inclusion of children in care being identified as an especially vulnerable group in each of the first three reports from the Unit.

Walker (1997) believed that social exclusion grew in Britain during the course of the 1980s and 1990s, partly as a result of the neoliberalist agenda of the Conservative government in power during this period which resulted in a reversal of the postwar trend towards narrowing the gap between rich and poor.

Walker (1997) identified three key assumptions to the Conservative approach to social policy and the welfare state during this period:

- 1) The government defined its role as providing a minimum for those in poverty rather than tackling the broader questions of social injustice. The market was to cater for rising living standards and the 'trickle-down' theory assumed that the growing economy would automatically provide improved living standards for those at the bottom.
- 2) The Government attempted to deny the existence of real poverty as opposed to relative poverty.
- 3) There was a strong emphasis on personal responsibilities for poverty.

In terms of young people in transition to adult lives, the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s sought to increase the role and responsibilities of families and to reduce the role of the state. Broad (1998) commented that young people in care fell through the cracks of this family-based model, which did not seem to apply to corporate parenting.

Thus, it can be seen that the Labour and Conservative interpretations of the concept of corporate parenting would differ in line with their underlying theories about the causes of social exclusion and actions necessary to prevent it. In a House of Commons debate (20 October 2005) on the Social Exclusion Unit, Howarth gave some insight into the Liberal Democrat view by commenting that whilst –

“There is a great deal to praise and celebrate in the work of the social exclusion unit. Under a Liberal Democrat Government, it might have a somewhat different focus, concentrating more on the political aspects of exclusion and perhaps not being quite so influenced ... that the best way to tackle almost any aspect of poverty is to get people into work. It seems to us that it is often the best way to approach such individuals’ problems, but not always.” (Hansard, p.7)

Given that they live in the care of the state, looked after children/young people have been seen as a group who are particularly amenable to state action to improve their circumstances and outcomes. However, the expansion of the state’s direct parenting responsibilities has raised concerns that the individual rights of young people may be undermined by such paternalism.

The UN Convention gives a child a right to privacy. The concept of corporate parenting would seem to be in conflict with this right.

“One major difference between corporate parenting and ordinary families is the number of people involved in a child’s care. It is essential to share information for good planning and care but, from the child’s point of view, this can seem very intrusive. ... Teenagers develop autonomy and increasing

privacy as part of their maturation, but for a child in care it is difficult to achieve the same sense of privacy.” (Munroe, 2001, pp. 132-3)

The need for a mentor for looked after children has been acknowledged, with the recognition that having an adult to confide in is particularly important during adolescence (DoH, 1996). In a study by Munro (2001), young people identified the need for a confidante but they linked ‘confiding’ to ‘confidentiality’ – to having an individual, not a team, whom they could trust.

Jeffs and Smith (2006) commented that –

“... the notion of ‘joined-up’ services proceeds from dubious assumption – that young people benefit from dealing with services that share information with one another.” (p.8)

They felt that this sharing of information could be an issue for agencies that work on the basis of a ‘fresh start’ and may not welcome such information but not be able to avoid making use of it. Also they thought that the co-ordinating of efforts of agencies could lead to a depersonalised approach that emphasises the management of cases rather than working with the young people’s accounts of situations and experiences. In addition, Jeffs and Smith felt that the information-sharing necessary for ‘joined-up’ services involved a significant extension of the surveillance of young people. This was supported by Whitaker (1999), who commented that the creeping process of gathering information on individuals renders them -

“... more and more transparent, relentlessly reducing the private spaces into which people have traditionally been able to retreat for refuge and self-definition’. (p. 4)

Goddard (2003) commenting on the potential conflict between a rights-based approach to the relationship between the state and adolescents and the explicitly paternalistic model favoured by the Labour Government believed that, in support of the latter, a rights-based approach could be seen to be inappropriate for this group of young people, in that it had not prevented care leavers from becoming a vulnerable group.

Given that the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DoH, 2000) prescribes the establishment of effective multi-agency collaboration in the education of looked after young people, the following section looks at some of the challenges for undertaking this.

Multi-agency working

In the early 21st century, inclusion was a prominent policy of the Government, both in terms of social inclusion and inclusion in education, to enable all children to attend local mainstream schools, except in exceptional circumstances. Coulling (2000) recognised the Government's inclusion agenda, with the emphasis firmly on encouraging and promoting 'joined-up thinking'. Legislation and guidance were clear that successful educational provision was about close working practice. The joined-up working proposed by the Guidance (DfEE/DoH, 2000) required consideration to be given to the need for multi-/inter-agency teamworking, the benefits derived from it, the practicalities of establishing frameworks to facilitate it and the issues that could inhibit or militate against it.

The DoH funded a study of multi-disciplinary education in health care. The Scottish Council for Educational Research (SCRE) undertook the study and, in the research report, Wilson and Pirrie (2000) identified that one of the drivers for multi-disciplinary teamworking was a greater focus on 'client-centredness', which was felt to resonate well-

“... with concern for greater social inclusion and [a] desire to promote 'joined up' policies for the benefit of the end-users.”
(2000, p.1)

Gilligan (1997) stated that the concept of collaboration was derived from philosophical and political assumptions about parity and the involvement of clients in the decision-making process. The Green Paper *Excellence for All Children* (DfEE, 1997) suggested that one of the keys to successful inclusion and enhanced educational attainment was multi-agency working between all statutory agencies.

In a study of a multi-agency programme for adolescent mothers, it was considered that the diverse needs of this group may have been unable to be met by special

programme units in a single setting and that a multi-agency approach would serve them more effectively (Holman and Arcus, 1987). Other studies have highlighted the cost benefits of collaborative working by assuring efficient use of limited funds and avoiding duplication of effort (see, for example, Holman and Arcus, 1987; Gilligan, 1997; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000).

In terms of defining what comprised multi-disciplinary teamwork, the key issues were identified by Wilson and Pirrie (2000), as activities which –

- (i) “bring more than two groups together;
- (ii) focus on complementary procedures and perspectives;
- (iii) provide opportunities to learn about each other;
- (iv) are motivated by a desire to focus on clients’ needs;
- (v) develop professionals’ understanding of their separate but inter-related roles as members of a multi-disciplinary team.” (2000, p.1)

The benefits derived from multi-agency working, whilst obviously being targeted towards the client, also applied to the agencies involved. Atkinson *et al.* (2002) highlighted that professionals were exposed to a broader perspective, a better understanding of the issues, and both increased understanding of and better interactions with other agencies. Atkinson and Kinder (1999) also commented on the benefits in terms of broader perspectives and more effective inter-agency liaison. They also reported on the wide range of expertise that could be involved, the pooling of ideas and the opportunity to give a speedy response for pupils with problems. The teachers in the project they researched commented on the advantages of someone who was not an educationalist being involved because they could bring a totally different viewpoint because they were not “immersed” in education (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999). They proposed that other agencies could focus on aspects different from those teachers were interested in, i.e. personal, social and emotional development (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999). Another participant, in the project studied, indicated that the multi-agency working

facilitated greater collaboration between different agencies rather than “passing referrals from one to another” (p. 44). The knowledge of different agencies’ systems derived by multi-agency working could result in professionals having realistic expectations of other agencies, thus eradicating the myths often surrounding issues (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999).

Atkinson *et al.* (2002) reported that children and their families benefited directly from agencies working in a multi-agency way. The contribution that other agencies made to children’s education resulted in improvement in their educational attainment and their access to education. Whilst the benefits of multi-disciplinary working both in terms of professional practice and service to the client were widely recognised, there was also wide agreement on the difficulties of implementing it (see, for example, Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Coulling, 2000; Holman and Arcus, 1987; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000; Hugman, 1995).

Clark (1993) commented that forming groups representing several disciplines would not guarantee the development of a shared understanding. There was some consensus that, for agencies to be able to work successfully in partnership, shared understanding was a necessary prerequisite (see, for example, Atkinson and Kinder, 1999; Coulling, 2000; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). Until there was a shared belief, or at least a shared understanding, of the differing professional disciplines, there could be no common goal (Coulling, 2000). In addition, understanding the role and responsibilities of other agencies and the need for common aims were important (see, for example, Atkinson and Kinder, 1999; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002), as were understanding the limitations in what each agency could offer and respecting each other’s ability as professionals (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999). Once this had been established there could be negotiation around the team roles in that “multidisciplinary teamworking does not require all members of staff to perform the same roles” (Wilson and Pirrie, 2000, p.2) and, therefore, clarification about roles would be necessary. Within this aspect of multidisciplinary working, it was recognised that individuals who were flexible in that they could work in an eclectic way, rather than adhere to the boundaries of their own discipline, were crucial elements for a multidisciplinary approach (Wilson and Pirrie, 2000). This would support Nolan’s (1995) comment that

interdisciplinary working, whilst valuing the importance of specific skills, benefited from blurring of the professional boundaries and establishing a willingness to share responsibility. Supporting this view, Atkinson and Kinder (1999) identified that there was a need to break down 'preciousness' to prevent territorialism, in terms of different agencies procedures. Conversely, even when workers from different disciplines were focused on the end-user, a barrier to effective collaboration was cultural and personal differences between them. In particular, team members whose attitudes reinforced traditional professional hierarchies and stereotypes could inhibit multidisciplinary teamwork (Wilson and Pirrie, 2000).

For successful inter- or multi-disciplinary working, the contribution made by committed individuals or 'champions' to the success of such working were identified (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). Atkinson *et al.* (2002) identified that an important success factor was the wish of those wanting to be involved, rather than being directed, to engage in multidisciplinary activity.

Even when attitudes and commitment were in place to support multidisciplinary working, there would still remain some of the practical issues. Good communication was identified as being one of the most important of these (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002;). This was a challenge at all levels of working but most commonly within coordinator-led initiatives, where those involved were seen to be more disparate (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002). Other difficulties included establishing procedures (Holman and Arcus, 1987; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002) and simply "getting people together" (Wilson and Pirrie, 2000, p. 37). Holman and Arcus (1987) suggested that the success of the multidisciplinary team, that they researched, was dependent on the role of a liaison worker who ensured that concerns and problems were dealt with quickly and facilitated communication to all involved in the programme.

In an educational context, special needs has always been an area that has necessitated multi-agency working. Dyson, Lin and Millward (1998) undertook a study to analyse the state of inter-agency co-operation for children with special

educational needs (SEN) and to develop models of effective practice. From this research, they identified the following four underlying ‘models’ of co-operation:

1. **Mutual co-operation model.** Agencies act autonomously but have systems in place for co-operating with each other when mutual support or joint action is required to fulfil statutory duties.
2. **Shared responsibility model.** Agencies recognise concept of need as multi-faceted, requiring a multi-agency response. Considerable autonomy devolved to multi-professional teams.
3. **Natural lead model.** Each agency in turn takes the lead to co-ordinate provision in different phases of child’s/young person’s life.
4. **Community services model.** Individual need viewed in broader context of community need, requiring response involving action at a number of levels within the community.

Given the current structure and working patterns of the various agencies in Shiretown Council, the mutual co-operation model would appear to be the most appropriate for the co-operative activity that is needed for those involved in corporate parenting to work together to improve the educational experience of children/young people in public care. Since the empirical research was undertaken, the Government has implemented the “Change for Children” agenda (DfES, 2004) based on the SEU report “Every Child Matters” (SEU, 2003). For multi-agency working, the Government has stated -

“A holistic approach to meeting the needs of children and young people is essential to the Every Child Matters agenda. This means achieving better co-ordination of the work of agencies that traditionally have provided discrete services to meet different aspects of the needs of children, young people and their families.

The Government aims to support the development of integrated frontline services and, more specifically, the

development of different models of multi-agency working that complement the work of existing core services.” (DfES, 2005c, p.1)

This may require that other models of co-operation become more appropriate when the necessary re-organisations have been effected.

For those involved in multi-agency working to have the 'shared understanding' that the literature suggested was a prerequisite to effective joined up working (see, for example, Atkinson and Kinder, 1999; Coulling, 2000; Wilson and Pirrie, 2000; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002), it would appear to be necessary to examine some of the underlying causes of the difficulties experienced by looked after pupils that impact on their educational experience. Research carried out for the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) by the National Foundation for Educational Research (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 2004) stated that teachers found challenging behaviour as being the principal difficulty in dealing with children in public care. According to this research, the difficulty was not a lack of understanding of the origins of the behaviour, but of finding ways to deal with it in the context of running a school. Whilst teachers may have an awareness of the difficulties that some looked after children have experienced, they are not necessarily aware of the reasons for the resultant underlying behaviours. The next section reviews the literature on some of the underlying causes of the behavioural difficulties.

Factors impacting on behaviour

For looked after children, this section explores the most common and serious of these, in terms of the mental health of looked after children. As Ivey (1989) stated –

“Often the most extreme client behaviour makes sense once it is situated in the context of the client’s developmental history and the unique way in which the client makes meaning out of that history.” (p. 30)

Some understanding of this could facilitate the change that is necessary to the attitudes of those working with the young people to bring about some improvement in their educational experience (Fletcher-Campbell and Hall, 1990).

Entry into the care system will have followed a traumatic event in the child's/young person's life. In a study of the population of children in foster care in the United States, it was found that most of them had been the victims of prolonged neglect and repeated abuse. They had not experienced a stable, nurturing environment during the early years of life (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2000). The Committee considered that such experiences were critical in the short and long term to development of the child's brain and the ability subsequently to participate fully in society (1999-2000). From Department of Health statistics (DoH, 2004) on the number of children looked after at 31 March 2002, 62% were in public care in the U.K. because of abuse or neglect.

It is during the first three to four years of life, when brain growth and development are most active, that many children are entering foster care. During this period, the anatomic brain structures that govern learning processes, personality traits and coping with stress and emotions are established, strengthened and made permanent (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2000). During these critical years, the nerve connections and neurotransmitter networks are formed. They are also influenced by negative environmental conditions, which include abuse, violence and lack of stimulation. If unused, the brain structures atrophy and, in this way, cognitive and emotional disruptions have the potential to impair brain development (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2000).

One of the most developmentally significant difficulties that children encounter if they have difficult early years is attachment disorder and this and the impact of it on their behaviour is explored below.

Attachment Disorders

It has been widely recognised that all children need to be attached to someone who considers them to be very special and who is totally committed to providing for their ongoing care (Hughes, 1997). The terms 'attachment' and 'bonding' are not synonymous. 'Attachment' refers to the feelings that a child has to the primary caregiver (usually mother). 'Bonding' refers to the feeling that the caregiver has towards her/his child. Both bonding and attachment can be impaired (Hanson and Spratt, 2000).

The origins of attachment theory are associated with the extensive writings and research of John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980). Bowlby (1969) suggested that there are distinct qualities of the child-caregiver bond that regulate the child's emotional experience and behaviour. He commented that, at birth, infants are equipped with a biologically based behaviour and motivational system that has evolved with the purpose of promoting proximity to a caregiver. The formation of this close relationship provides safety and protection, thereby (in an evolutionary sense) increasing the chances of survival. When this bond is threatened in some way or the child is separated from the caregiver, activation of this innate behaviour is initiated with proximity-seeking behaviours (e.g. crying). The caregiver's responses to these behaviours become directed into a goal-directed partnership between child and caregiver (Lyddon, 2001). According to Bowlby (1969), the caregiver/child relationship is crucial to the infant's comfort and security. The child's experience of a positive, responsive relationship with a caregiver is a necessary precursor for healthy exploration and adjustment. Ultimately, it can shape the way in which the child is able to relate to the outside world (see, for example, Bowlby, 1969; Lyddon, 2001).

Central to attachment theory is that, along with the associated patterns of proximity-seeking behaviour or responding to the caregiver, infants develop corresponding working models or cognitive expectations about the accessibility and responsiveness of their caregiver, as well as their own ability to elicit these responses (Bowlby, 1973). A working model of 'self' is how children view themselves based on their role in the attachment relationship, based on a set of

beliefs about one's worthiness and competence as an individual. Bowlby (1973) asserted that one's working model of others derives from the original working models of primary caregivers. These would eventually generalise to broader base expectations about others.

The self-systems of securely attached individuals were seen to be relatively open to new information ('feedback'), whilst maintaining a balance from the original set of beliefs ('feedforward'). The result of this was that the secure self-system was flexible and open to new learning and change (Mikulincer, 1997). These working models lead to secure individuals possessing a sense of self-worth, together with an expectation that other people were generally trustworthy, accessible and responsive. On the other hand, the self-systems of insecurely attached individuals tend to be relatively inflexible to new learning and change and tend to operate in a foreclosed manner around a few salient constructs or themes such as dependence, mistrust or personal worthlessness (Hughes, 1997). Insecure individuals who have experienced maladaptive attachment possess more negative views dependent on their attachment styles, as follows –

- (i) *Preoccupied attachment style* – individuals possess a sense of unworthiness combined with a positive evaluation of others.
- (ii) *Fearful attachment* – individuals possess a sense of personal unworthiness, together with an expectation that other people will be rejecting and untrustworthy, trusting neither their internal feelings nor other people's intentions (Bartholomew, 1990).

There is the recognition that a healthy infant and child develops as part of a primary attachment to a caregiver (Hughes, 1997). What are the consequences of this for children and young people who come into the care system? It is likely that there will have already been attachment difficulties for the child, in that placement in care often follows a period of neglect, abuse, exposure to violence, or multiple changes in caregivers. Chinitz (1995) suggested that the attachment relationship may have been disrupted and, therefore, maladaptive. Neglect has very profound

and long-lasting consequences on all aspects of child development – poor attachment formation, understimulation, development delay, poor physical development, and antisocial behaviour (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2000).

It would appear to have been established that children/young people entering the care system have a high probability of having attachment difficulties/disorders. What are the consequences of this for their education? The Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption and Dependent Care (2000) considered that mental and physical abuse, during a child's early years, fixes the brain in an acute stress response mode that cause the child to respond in a fearful, hypervigilant manner. Older children, who have suffered repeated traumatization, may suffer from post traumatic disorder and freeze when anxious. This could be considered oppositional or defiant by those interacting with them (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2000). Repeated experience of trauma can lead to behaviours such as motor hyperactivity, anxiety, mood swings and impulsiveness. The implications for this in the classroom were explained by West *et al.* (2001) in that, when a child had experienced an interpersonal crisis (for example, loss or rejection), it could trigger disorganised responses because of the association with earlier traumatic experiences. Thus, a poorly attached child could view discipline as arbitrary, cruel and rejecting. Sometimes the child could perceive discipline as abusive but, if not, certainly as neglecting his/her wishes and needs and humiliating. There would be no insight that discipline was necessary nor that it was associated with his/her behaviour. To the child with an attachment disorder, discipline is proof that the adult administering it is cruel and that any nice behaviours displayed by that person are deceitful (Hughes, 1997). The need for the child to have control over situations may lead to rejection of activities where this cannot be achieved.

“This compulsive need to control functions [is] to manage their unmet needs for both attachment and autonomy. ... [T]heir only means of trying to establish a sense of safety is through successfully controlling whatever happens ... [T]his frantic

control is manifested as constant oppositional and/or avoidant behaviours ...”. [Hughes, 1997, p.4]

Teachers and other professionals may be surprised that, when a child/young person is removed from an abusive situation and taken into care, the behaviours associated with the abuse/neglect continue to be manifested. Hughes (1997) asserted that the results of the abuse live on within the child and render him/her unable to take advantage of new opportunities presented. The Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, (2000) suggested that children who suffered emotional stress during the periods of early brain development and personality formation would require support that is both reparative as well as preventative.

Reber (1996) commented that reactive attachment disorder (RAD) was one of the most severe forms of infant psychopathology in terms of attachment disturbances. There is recognition by some psychologists that the risk for RAD is increased by factors that may contribute to abuse and neglect (Tibbits-Kleber and Howell, 1985). There has been the suggestion that child sexual abuse, family and social adversity are risk factors to psychiatric disorders, especially post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and reactive attachment disorder (Verlag, 1999). There has been an increase in the number of children/people diagnosed with RAD in recent years (Hanson and Spratt, 2000). Children who have suffered abuse (physical, sexual or emotional) and/or severe neglect are most likely to receive this diagnosis because of the belief that the behaviour problems, displayed by these children, stem from maladaptive relationships with abusive caregivers (Hanson and Spratt, 2000). Reber (1996) stated that behaviour associated with reactive attachment disorder is similar to that of a conduct disorder, oppositional-defiant disorder or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder) and RAD is often misdiagnosed as one of these but that it is essential to distinguish those who have attachment disturbances. This was reinforced by Hanson and Spratt (2000) who believed that attachment problems needed to be identified and treated because of the risk of developing psychopathology in later childhood, as a result of insecure or disorganised attachment. However, they recognised that there was some considerable disagreement about what reactive attachment disorder actually

entails, how it should be assessed and what interventions should be used with these children and families. Hanson and Spratt (2000) concurred with the wrong diagnosis theory, believing that the behaviour “laundry list” associated with RAD might be indicative of conduct disorder, ADHD or other disruptive behaviour problems, not involving core disruptions in attachment.

For society in general and school in particular, the Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care (2000) believed that -

“Children with attachment disorders and an inability to trust and love often grow up to vent their rage and pain on society.”

(Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2000, p. 1148)

For schools, this “rage and pain” can be expressed in inappropriate and disruptive behaviour. This possibly explains the number of exclusions (permanent and fixed term) experienced by looked after young people and their levels of under-achievement, evidenced by national assessment tests (Statutory Assessment Tests [SATs] and General Certificates of Secondary Education [GCSEs]).

Target and Fogaghy (2000) suggested that one of the central aspects of a child’s social competence and confidence was the security of attachment, in that it provided the growing child with the resilience, trust and ability to regulate emotion, and to develop the self-reflective capacities that may be crucial when encountering adverse life events. Dent and Cameron (2003) commented that without secure attachments, many ordinary stresses of life may become serious threats. They identified starting school, learning in the classroom, interacting with peers, commencing work and retaining a job, as points of potential crisis. These are all areas that have been identified as areas where young people in public care have difficulties (DfES, 2000) and would support the notion that extra support is required for looked after children at times of transition, such as primary to secondary and 16+ transitions (DfES, 2004b).

Whilst attachment disorder is common for children in the looked after system, it is not the only cause of behavioural difficulties. The following section examines another possible factor.

Post traumatic stress

When subject to trauma, the human brain goes into survival mode where injury is accepted as a trade for life. Separation from the primary attachment figure and familiar environment presents an overwhelming threat, even when the attachment figure or known environment is a source of harm. In response to such threat, the brain floods the body with massive quantities of stress hormones, which cause major areas of the brain function to close down and others to become activated and sensitised. The physical changes to the brain and body also results in changes to social awareness, so that others may be seen as threats (Cairns & Stanway, 2004).

The toxic mix of chemicals automatically generated in response to threat results in injury. Cairns and Stanway (2004) proposed that there is a statistical probability that a child will suffer lasting impairment as a result of stress injury. Those whose circumstances prevent spontaneous recovery will suffer some measure of impairment, the extent of which will depend on complex resilience factors. They stated that humans adapt to persistent impairments after traumatic stress injuries but this often leads to behaviours and other symptoms of disorder that are considered abnormal and this can impact greatly on the ability of a child to manage in a school environment (Cairns & Stanway, 2004).

In terms of whether looked after children will have experienced trauma, Cairns and Stanway (2004) commented that the most obvious life factor that they share is that they have been separated from their parents. Whilst this may have been for a variety of reasons, the separation from all that has been familiar will be traumatic. Thinking about looked after children as traumatised children allows the development of a model that works with the individual child, allowing for the fact that every child recovers differently from injury.

Cairns and Stanway (2004) felt that, even when a child had entered the looked after system, it is likely that they will experience continuing stress in relation to contact with absent family members.

“There is no such thing as a pain free contact arrangement” (p. 19)

So for looked after children, there will certainly be trauma in their entrance into the care system and arrangements that continue when they are in care. Add to this their likely pre-care experiences in that they will have also lived through significant adverse experience in their early lives. This early adversity can have profound and lasting effects on global development. When children have suffered such impairment of development, they are less able to recover from later traumatic experience. Cairns and Stanway described this as –

“This is the ‘double whammy’ faced by many children in public care.” (p. 20)

In terms of how trauma impacts on behaviour –

“Socially, the traumatised child is constrained by what has been called the ‘glass wall’ of trauma. Cut off from others, preoccupied with trauma-related thoughts and feelings, unpredictably subject to panic or rage, unable to explain their actions or engage in moral accountability, these are often uncomfortable companions for those around them.” (Cairns & Stanway, p.23).

Cairns (1999) commented that the patterns of avoidance and intrusion that have resulted from the trauma generate dangerous and destructive behaviour.

It would appear that looked after children are extremely vulnerable to experience attachment and/or post traumatic stress disorders. The former as a result of poor early parenting and the latter as a result of experiences with the birth family and around the separation from them. In addition, Cairns believed (1999) that children separated from their families for any reason would grieve that loss. In addition, because of the separation, they are deprived of the familiar structures for

holding and containing grief. This can result in the grief being manifested in a variety of behaviours, such as a need to control the situation by domination, creation of rituals to ‘hold the world together’, dependency on anyone who will accept the burden of their need, aggression to helpers for failing to supply comfort, etc.

“Losses that change the fabric of our lives lead to grief. Like trauma, loss is a transformative experience; it shakes and shifts the patterns of our lives, and we emerge from the experience changed. The process of that change is the process we call grieving.” (Cairns, 1999, p.135)

The literature on attachment and post traumatic stress disorders indicate that it is probable that looked after children will be disadvantaged in the long-term and this is unlikely to be remediated by corporate parenting. It is likely that there will be a need for long-term support, which may be provided by therapeutic input or structures of work, partners, etc. Teachers need to have an awareness of this to avoid looked after young people being labelled as difficult or disruptive when their difficulties persist after a period of stability in a placement. It has been identified that growing up in an abusive home environment is a risk factor for emotional and behavioural problems throughout one’s life (Murray, 2003). However, whilst exposure to risk can increase the likelihood of negative outcomes, it is not inevitable (see, for example, Dent and Cameron, 2003; Murray, 2003).

“The concept of resilience suggests that some children, even those exposed to the most extreme and harsh conditions, can overcome adversity and have healthy adult outcomes.”
(Murray, 2003, p.19)

The next section examines the concept of resilience.

Resilience

Dent and Cameron (2003) supported the view that some resilient young people can overcome extreme adversity, stating that there are *adverse* factors in the living context of a child that combine to threaten or challenge healthy development.

These could include maternal depression, marital discord/domestic violence, experience of abuse, neglect and separation/loss through bereavement, divorce or separation from a significant person in the child's life. One, and most frequently, several of these adverse factors will have occurred in the lives of looked after children/young people. There was the realisation that there were very few groups in contemporary society who exhibited so many of the indicators of social exclusion (Dent and Cameron, 2003). How is it then that some children and young people, who are exposed to risk, adapt positively to life's challenges?

In contrast to the negative factors, *protective* factors have been identified that can act as buffers to the effects of adverse experiences. Edwards (2001) stated that between half and two-thirds of children who grew up in families with mentally-ill, alcoholic, abusive or criminally involved parents, or in poverty-stricken or war-torn communities, were able to adjust to potentially damaging conditions with resilience. He identified that this was partly due to an inborn capacity for resilience which enabled them to develop social competence, problem-solving abilities, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and an innate sense of purpose. There was the belief that some protective factors had genetic roots, such as outgoing social personality (Henderson, 1998). In contrast, Bloom (1996) believed that social resilience was more likely to reside in systems, contexts and relationships, rather than the individual him/herself. This view was supported by other researchers who identified the existence of protective factors in the environment that contributed to resilience (see, for example, Dent and Cameron, 2003; Murray, 2003; Rutter, 1985). This latter view is appealing in that it identifies that resilience can be developed, whereas the genetic theory gives little hope.

Henderson (1998) stated that protective factors could be promoted to foster resilience in children and young people. He cited caring and support as the most crucial elements that promoted resilience, identifying the presence of a trusting relationship, even with a single adult, as crucial. Dent and Cameron (2003) asserted that resilient individuals have an understanding of what has happened to them (insight), develop an understanding of what has happened to others (empathy) and experience a quality of life that is often denied to others

(achievement). They suggested that the protective factors included a supportive teacher, a valuing school, caring grandparents or an ethnic community group that could help foster a secure identity. The school as a protective factor had also been recognised by other researchers (see, for example Gilligan, 1998; Nettles, 2000). School, as a formative living and learning environment, has the potential to exert a major influence on the personal and social, as well as the academic, development of pupils. School life offers vulnerable pupils a wide range of opportunities to increase resilience, including acting as a complementary secure base, providing opportunities for developing self-esteem and self-efficacy (see, for example, Dent and Cameron, 2003; Gilligan, 1998).

Murray (2003) believed that –

“Among school-level variables thought to exert the most powerful influence on children and youth are close and caring teacher-student relationships, the promotion of self-esteem and self-determination, a consistent focus on academic skills, the active teaching and modelling of appropriate social and behavioural skills, Teachers can have powerful and lasting effects on the lives of children and youth ... both through the provision of important learning experiences and, perhaps more important, through the quality of the relationships they develop with students. ” (p.26)

Poor academic achievement was cited as a risk factor and strong academic achievement as a protective factor (Murray, 2003). Given that low teacher expectations had been identified as a barrier to achievement for looked after children, there needed to be some change to this view. Edwards (2001) stated that high expectations were positively associated with the development of resiliency, in that students responded to high expectations by performing better and developing more positive views of themselves. To be efficacious, expectations had to have personal relevance. To achieve this they had to be created by the students themselves, so that they could claim ownership (Edwards, 2001). Benard (1993) concurred with this view –

“Resilient children create goals, aspire to do better academically, continue to try, believe they can and will succeed, and are able to see a future that is bright and good.”
(p. 47)

Even though children have an innate ability to develop resiliency, this could be diminished by exposure to abusive conditions, including within the school. Whilst schools were ideal places to promote resiliency, Edwards (2001) identified that a number of students had requested more caring teachers and cited that some children had adversarial associations with their teachers.

Jackson and Martin (1998) undertook a study of care leavers who were high educational achievers (five or more O levels or GCSEs at Grades C or above). Most of the high achievers reported a special relationship with at least one person who made time to talk with and listen to them. Maluccio *et al.* (1996) also identified the presence of a positive adult role model in the child’s life setting as well as the amount of time spent with that person to be important in fostering resilience. Edwards (2001) identified -

“That the most frequently encountered positive role model in the lives of resilient children, outside of the family circle, is a favourite teacher.” (p.16)

Dent and Cameron (2003) believed that, for some schools, undertaking this work with vulnerable children and young people would constitute significant change to the practices of teachers. They believed that whilst schools could offer considerable resistance to new initiatives, the concept of resilience would be inviting to teachers given that the basic tenet of education was to maximise life chances for all and improve the life chances of disadvantaged pupils.

The literature on attachment and post traumatic disorder theories provides some explanation of the underlying behaviours that teachers identified as being the most difficult aspect of looked after children. If teachers had this information, they could begin to make sense of some of the pupils’ actions that could be interpreted as oppositional, e.g. insolence, defiance. With this understanding it may be

possible for teachers to change their practice, so that these responses were not ‘triggered’, e.g. discipline to be addressed in non-traditional ways. With more caring attitudes to young people, the conditions that promote resilience could be implemented. The culture and ethos of the school would appear to be paramount in promoting this approach. The next section examines the contributions that schools and teachers can make to the corporate parenting of young people in public care.

The Role of the School

Bhabra *et al.* (2002, p. 15) identified the following aspects of school that have the strongest influence on the educational attainment of children in care –

- School’s ethos of ‘inclusion’
- High expectations of the children with knowledge and understanding of issues faced by children in care
- Continuity of school placement and ‘stable’ staffing
- A balance between understanding the needs of children in care and making sure the children did not feel different

Inclusion

The Government has identified young people in public care as a group who are socially excluded (Ofsted, 2000a). Thomas *et al.* (1998) identified that “inclusion is a buzzword of the 1990’s” (p. 192) and, indeed, of this new millennium. Politicians stressed their commitment to inclusion and social justice and the new inclusive mood created a growing demand for mainstream schools to find ways of including and teaching *all* children (Thomas *et al.*, 1998). What does the term ‘educational inclusion’ mean? Whilst much of the debate appears to be around the inclusion into mainstream of pupils who would have formerly been educated in special schools, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate stated that –

“Educational inclusion is more than a concern about any one group of pupils such as those pupils who have been or are

likely to be excluded from school. It is about equal opportunities for all pupils, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background. (Ofsted, 2000a, p. 4)

One of the groups identified by this document was ‘children looked after by the local authority’ (Ofsted, 2000a, p. 4)

The document further identified that an educationally inclusive school was one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person mattered. Effective schools were educationally inclusive schools. This showed, not only in their performance, but also in their ethos and their willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties. Rather than meaning treating all pupils in the same way, it involves taking account of pupils’ varied life experiences and needs (Ofsted, 2000a). However, there was very little literature to support the link between ‘effectiveness’ and ‘inclusivity’ because it was not clear what form the evidence would take. The Inclusion Index (CSIE, 2002) encouraged schools to identify the barriers to learning and participation that may occur within their cultures, policies and practices. Presumably the removal of such barriers would create a more effective school.

Henderson (2002) reported that it had been evidenced, from successful schools, that to establish an inclusive school the following points were important:

- “1) Consideration had to be given to curriculum, learning and teaching, support for pupils, quality of the management and the ethos;
- 2) Positive values are promoted, such as mutual respect, equality and fairness and high standards of work and behaviour;
- 3) Staff know their pupils and are concerned for them, regardless of the size of the school;
- 4) There is a strong and visible leadership from senior staff;

- 5) It is necessary to engage with other professionals in the community;
- 6) Teachers analyse the needs of pupils at risk and take action.” (2002, p.4)

Much of this was supported by the initiatives established by the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DoH, 2000). Designated teachers should know and ‘advocate for’ looked after pupils [(3) above]. Designated teachers should be senior level, influential teachers [(4) above]. Inter-agency collaboration is a requirement [(5) above]. Personal Education Plans facilitate the analysis of pupils’ needs and associated actions [(6) above].

Successful inclusive schools have a culture of acceptance articulated through leadership which is seen to be supportive of inclusion (Thomas *et al.*, 1998). Sebba with Sachdev (1997) asserted that the teachers’ role in creating a socially inclusive school was clear. Where they set clear examples of valuing difference, pupils responded by interacting more openly with each other. The experience of inclusive education was a force in changing pupils’ attitudes and behaviour.

The literature indicates that an accepting and nurturing culture and ethos are prerequisites for a school to become educationally inclusive (see, for example, Sebba with Sachdev, 1997; Cole, 1998; Rose, 1998; Thomas *et al.*, 1998; Ofsted, 2000a; Henderson, 2002). Kunc (1992) criticised schools for providing little nurturance or assistance in developing an atmosphere of ‘belonging’. He believed that the majority of educators would agree that it was important for a child to develop a sense of self-worth and confidence. However, it had been assumed that a child’s sense of self-worth could be developed from a sense of personal achievement that was independent of the child’s sense of belonging. If there is concurrence with Maslow’s contested, yet widely accepted, view of hierarchy of human needs (see fig. 2.1 below), it is apparent that self-worth can arise only when an individual is grounded in a community (Kunc, 1992). Maslow posited that the needs of humans could be divided and prioritised into five ‘levels’. Individuals do not seek the satisfaction of a need at one level until the previous ‘level of need’ is met.

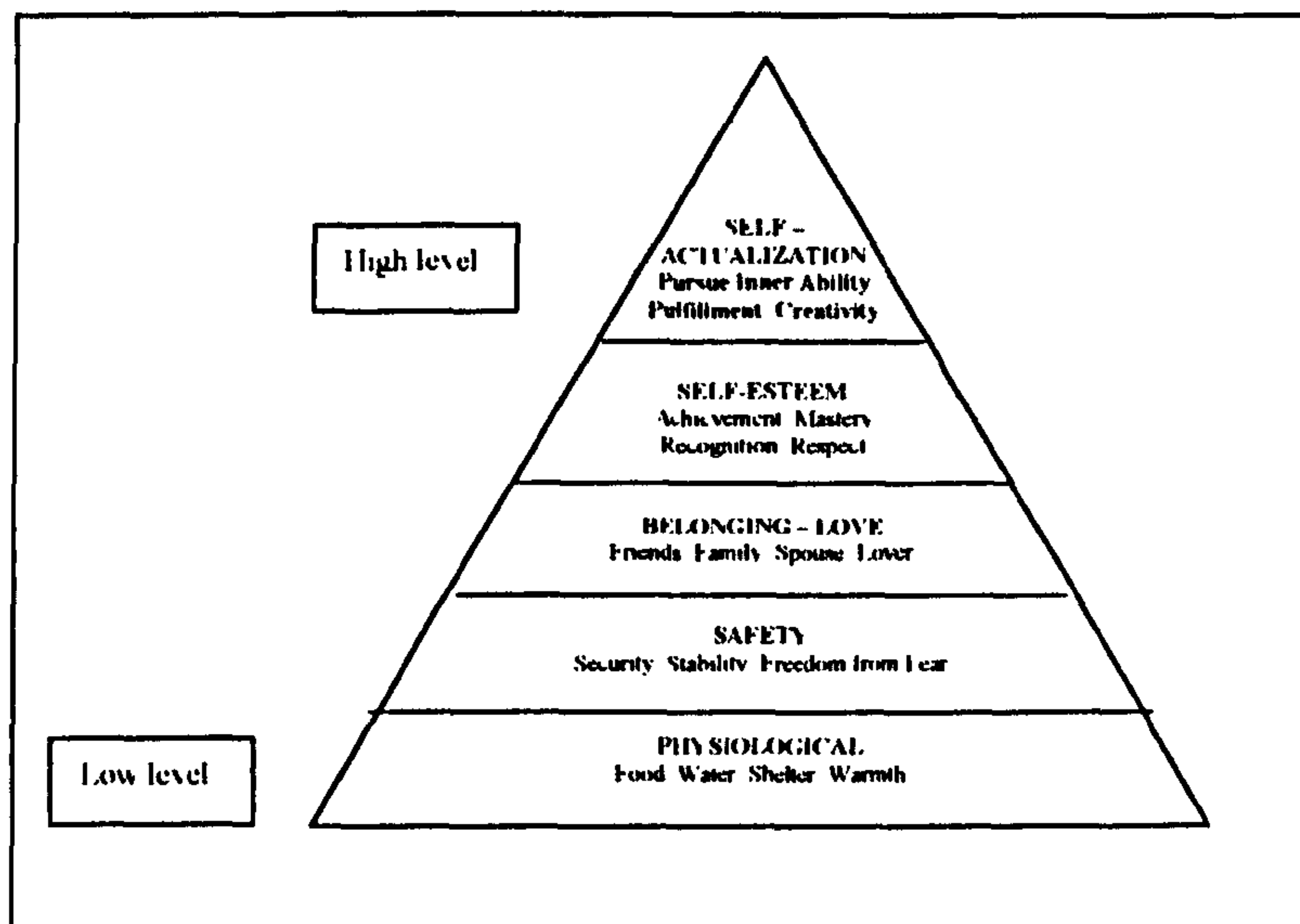


Figure 2.1
MASLOW'S
HIERARCHY OF
HUMAN NEED
MASLOW, A. [1970]

Cole (1998) supports this belief and expands on it by stating that the most important determinants of self-image are children's relationships with their families, and this is followed by their experiences at school. For looked after children, family relationships may not have been positive and the school experiences would, therefore, be of even more importance in giving them a sense of belonging.

Cole (1998) stated that –

“The central concern of humanists for the quality of interaction between adult and child remains at the heart of inclusive practice.” (p.121)

Cole (1998) stated the belief that children learned most readily from those who had ‘vital meaning for them’ (p. 121). In education, teachers would be expected to fulfil this role. Brophy (1987) asserted that motivation to learn could be stimulated by communication of expectation of significant others (especially parent and teachers). The next sub-section reviews the literature on this topic.

Teacher expectations

Low expectations from teachers, carers and social workers have been identified as a barrier to academic success for looked after children (see, for example, Fletcher-Campbell, 1997; Jackson, 2001; Harker *et al.*, 2004b).

Conversely, Gilligan stated that -

“High expectations of their students imply that the school and the teachers believe in the innate capacity of the young person. Such high expectations can help to promote resilience in young people struggling with adversity.” (1998, p.15)

Elliott (2002) undertook a study to investigate whether or not teachers had a lower expectation of looked after children than they did of non-looked after children. She drew on the self-fulfilling prophecy research, which suggested that low teacher expectations caused or maintained poor attainment (see, for example, Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Chaikin *et al.*, 1974; Matthews, 1982). Elliott (2002) asserted that previous research had focused solely on academic attainment. Therefore, the research –

“... investigated five areas of the education process that may influence academic success or failure, viz:

1. Academic performance – broken down into three discrete areas:

- a) staying on task;
- b) accuracy of work;
- c) completing the task.

2. Homework

3. Attendance

4. Bullying (subject of)

5. Bullying (perpetrator of)” (Elliott, 2002, p. 61)

Elliott’s study comprised a questionnaire survey for the subject/classroom teachers and semi-structured interviews with Heads of Year. The questionnaire resulted in two significant results:

- i. Teachers expected that looked after children would not meet homework deadlines as consistently as their non-looked after peers;

- ii. Teachers expected looked after children to be the victims of bullying more often than their non-looked after peers.

Using self-fulfilling prophecy theory, these expectations could lead to –

- (i) Looked after children not consistently handing their homework in on time;
- (ii) There being a greater prevalence in children bullying looked after children.

The interviews with Heads of Years resulted in lower expectations of looked after children on the measures of academic performance but results of the questionnaires given to class teachers did not. Fletcher-Campbell *et al.* (2004) commenting on Elliott's research in terms of the latter, cautioned that while the results may have indicated a change of attitude on the part of teachers, concerning academic measures, the limitations and small sample size indicated further data were needed to give a national picture. However, Elliott's research (2002) does indicate that there not only needs to be a challenge on the expectations of teachers but also on the acceptance of the resulting behaviours, e.g. not handing in homework.

Interestingly, if low expectations are seen as a barrier to learning (DfEE/DoH, 2000), the Government's targets on the educational attainments for looked after young people could be seen as contributing to their under-achievement. Whilst they were higher than had previously been attained by looked after children, they were far below those for the general population, (e.g. a target of 15% looked after young people obtaining 5 A*-C GCSEs against 50%+ of the general population). The Government had indicated that these targets were, slowly and realistically, to 'close the gap' in achievements of children in public care and the general population. The targets were not considered to be the 'end goal' but this was not communicated to the local authority professionals involved in attempting to improve the attainment of this group and, therefore, almost certainly, not to the designated teachers. Also the targets did not address the profiles of attainment, in that children and young people with disabilities were over-represented in the

population of children in public care and GCSEs were not the appropriate yardstick with which to measure their attainment.

Martin and Jackson (2002) surveyed 38 high academic achievers who had previously been in care. Nearly a third of the sample commented on the need to overcome the negative stereotypes of looked after children, including making teachers aware that the labels of disruptive or low intelligence often attributed to looked after children were inaccurate and unfair.

Harker *et al.* (2003) undertook a survey of 80 looked after children and young people regarding their educational experience whilst in care. The young people were asked to identify any person/people who had supported or hindered their educational progress. Although 62 of the respondents were able to do so, the authors found it -

“... disquieting that 18 young people were unable to give a single example of a supportive person.” (p. 94)

The type of supportive individuals and frequency of comments about each type is shown in figure 2.2, below. Teachers were most mentioned as fulfilling a supportive role. As well as providing support for children to achieve academically, they were seen to have promoted self-belief in children's ability and were providers of emotional support.

“Forty-eight of the young people mentioned individuals who they felt had hindered their educational progress.” (Harker *et al.*, 2003, p. 94)

The categories mentioned were identical to those for supporting progress, but the ordering of frequency was not. Social workers were most frequently mentioned (19 comments) as those who had hindered educational progress. This was often about the young person's school being changed without any perceived awareness of the young person's needs or the impact of the move on academic progress. Also highlighted by the respondents was the low level of interest social workers demonstrated towards their education.

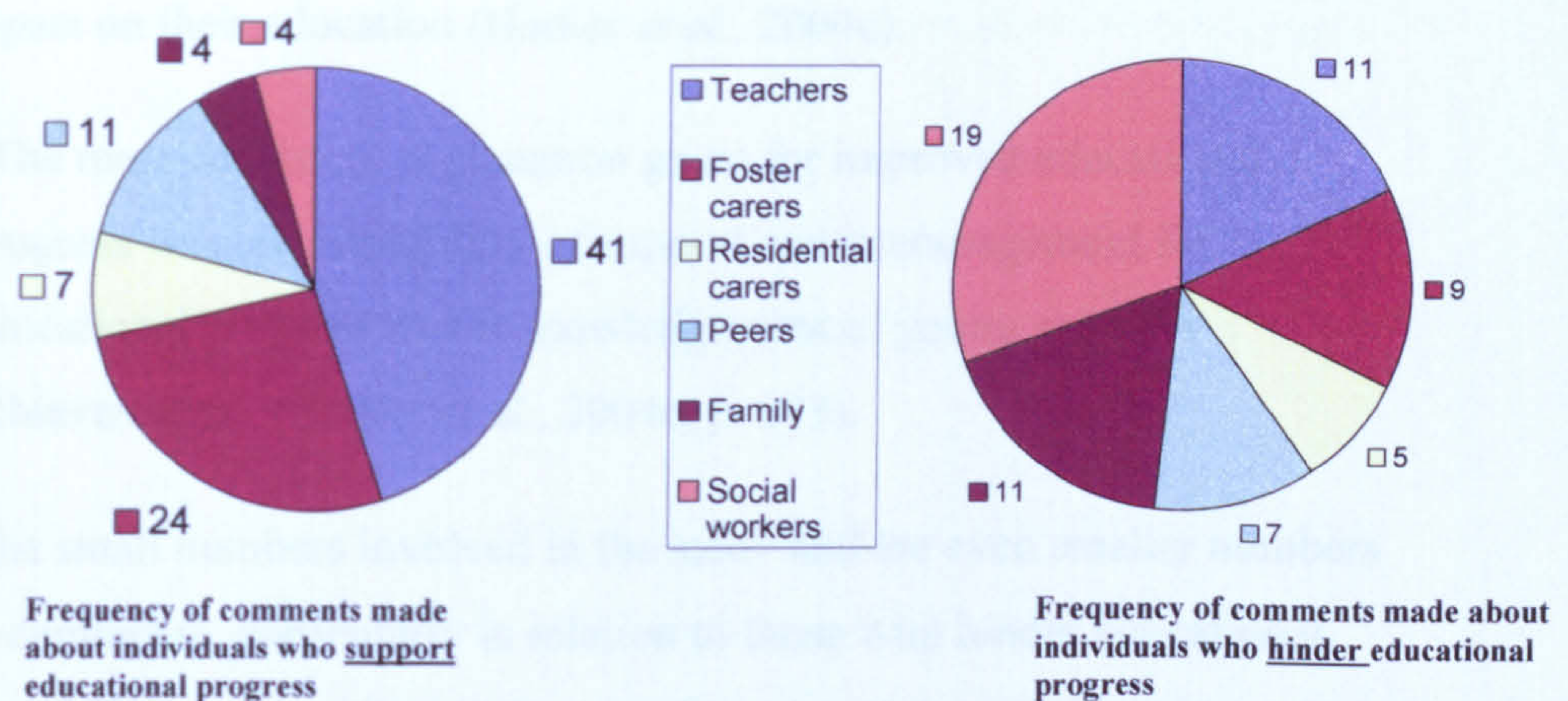


Figure 2.2 Individuals who support/hinder educational progress (Harker *et al.*, 2003, p.95)

Eighteen months later, the researchers undertook a follow-up study of a sample of 56 of the young people in the original study to attempt to identify whether their perceptions had changed on the educational process and factors that might support or hinder their education. The following table (2.4) indicates the young people's perceptions on individuals who support educational progress and compares the two periods of the study:

Original frequency	Follow-up frequency	Individual	Original frequency	Follow-up frequency
7	4	Peers	9	8
4	12	Social workers	8	7
32	29	Teachers	6	4
21	21	Foster carers	5	1
3	3	Residential carers	1	2
3	11	Family members	8	1
7	4	Self	1	1
10	7	No-one	29	35

Comments about individuals who **support** educational progress

Comments about individuals who **hinder** educational progress

Table 2.1. Frequency of comments made by 56 young people taking part in original and follow-up interviews about individuals who support/hinder educational progress (Harker *et al.*, 2004c)

It can be seen that the young people reported teachers and carers as continuing to be the most frequently mentioned providers of educational support but there was a marked increase in the proportion of comments relating to educational support from social workers. The follow-up study also reported that the young people's perceptions of educational progress were significantly higher at follow-up

interview and an increased proportion reported that being looked after had had a positive impact on their education (Harker *et al.*, 2004c).

“The most consistent explanation given for improved educational progress was the availability of support and encouragement for educational progress and acknowledgement of young people’s achievements. (Harker *et al.*, 2004c, p. 273).

However, the small numbers involved in the study and the even smaller numbers of reported comments, particularly in relation to those who hinder educational progress, should be viewed with caution and the research be considered as exploratory. However, subject to this caution, the role of the teacher in providing support for looked after children appears to be established.

Gilligan (1998) felt that the role of the teacher as the professional with most contact with children appeared to go unacknowledged by social workers. He stated that –

“It seems curious that social work, whose defining professional emphasis is on the social context and social experience of the client, should risk losing sight of the social institution second only to the family in its developmental impact on children.”
(p.14)

Gilligan (1998) stated that educational progress could enhance a child’s recovery following trauma and, therefore, it was not necessary for the young person to recover emotionally before fully engaging in education. To facilitate this fully the school placement needed to provide some consistency. The effects of changing schools is examined in the next sub-section.

Changing schools

Lack of stability in care placements, necessitating frequent changes of schools, has been cited as a barrier to learning for looked after young people (see, for example, Jackson, 1987; DfEE/DoH, 2000). Henderson (2001) reporting on two surveys on literacy in Glasgow and London schools, stated that there was a clear link between

student mobility (changing schools) and underachievement. Strand (2002) considered that the link was too simplistic and that the impact of other factors needed to be considered, so that –

“... the reasons a pupil moves school rather than the change of school itself, is probably the most important factor in relation to attainment.” (p. 75)

Durkin (2000) stated that children accept changes as part of school, in that they experience frequent changes of classes, teachers and pupils. This would appear to support the notion that it is the reason for, rather than the change *per se*, that has an adverse effect on attainment.

Pupil mobility occurs as a result of, or alongside, other factors, such as disruption and, therefore, it is difficult to isolate the effect of changing schools on attainment (see, for example, Office for Standards in Education, 2002; Alexander and Entwisle; 1996; Dobson and Henthorne, 1999). Whilst it appears that there was little specific analysis on the effect of mobility on the education of those moving, there appeared to be a connection between pupil mobility and the effect on the schools (Dobson and Henthorne, 1999). Ofsted (2002) reported that schools with high pupil mobility tended to have lower average GCSE scores. Fletcher-Campbell and Archer (2003) felt that the lower GCSE scores of these schools could have been attributable to other factors, such as social disadvantage, rather than mobility. Certainly Kerbow (1996) found that students from lower socio-economic classes were more likely to change schools. Supporting this, Ofsted (2002) reported on a relationship between eligibility for free school meals and mobility, although this was more significant in primary schools than secondary schools.

The Ofsted Report (2002) looked at the difficulties the curricula caused or ameliorated in regard to changing schools. It was asserted that during Key Stages 1 and 2, the National Curriculum and national literacy and numeracy strategies, promoted consistency of provision, which made transfer to another school less disruptive to learning during primary schooling. At Key Stage 3, schools have greater flexibility in the curricula they provide and this could cause difficulties

with continuity for pupils transferring during secondary schooling. During Key Stage 4, subject options and examination syllabuses may not be consistent between schools. Kerbow (1996) stated that changing schools would cause disruption to a child's learning. This drop in learning may not persist after the student had adjusted to the new environment. However he believed that for pupils who experienced multiple changes of schools there could be a cumulative effect of mobility that would result in a substantive decline in academic ability.

Whilst there was not consensus on the relationship between pupil mobility and academic attainment (see, for example, Durkin, 2000; Strand, 2002), several researchers highlighted the need for schools to manage the induction of pupils moving into their establishments at non-traditional times (see, for example, Ofsted, 2002; Alexander and Entwisle, 1996; Kerbow, 1996). The Ofsted Report (2002) identified effective approaches to mitigate the effects of mobility in terms of relationships, information sharing and new pupils receiving information, good induction and personal support. These would appear to be encapsulated in the characteristics that Henderson (2002) identified as prerequisites for an inclusive school.

Whilst there was not consensus on whether it was the act of changing school or the factors that caused the change that caused educational disadvantage, what was clear was that young people often had a change of school when they became looked after and, for some, there could be several changes if there was difficulty in securing a local, long-term foster/residential placement. To prevent this, local authorities had to address the issue of availability of suitable care placements in their own area. Shiretown Borough Council began this process by the recruitment of fee paid carers (community parents and Treatment Foster Carers). If there could be continuity of the school placement when a child becomes looked after, it may be possible to address some of the other identified barriers to learning. The next sub-section focuses on one initiative introduced to overcome these.

Designated teachers

The introduction of designated teachers for young people in public care (DfEE/DoH, 2000) was an attempt to overcome some of the barriers to learning

for looked after children. There was the expectation that the role of designated teacher would be undertaken by a senior member of staff, who could both advocate for the young person and ensure that all teachers in the school were aware of the difficulties experienced by this group in general terms, e.g. underachievement, low self-esteem, etc., and of individual pupils, as appropriate. In terms of multi-agency working, for looked after children, the designated teacher was expected to be the main contact within the school for other professionals.

Bhabra *et al.* (2002) commented from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) research survey that perceptions of the role of designated teacher were very mixed, with some respondents thinking that some of them did not have a clear understanding of their role and had difficulties in reconciling an advocacy role with a teaching/monitoring one. Other professionals were positive about the role and thought that it would eventually have a major impact on school policy as well as individual children. However, there was some concern that the designated teacher role might encourage the responsibility for looked after children to be seen as the preserve of one person, rather than of all teachers (SEU, 2002). There was also evidence that designated teachers were working in very different conditions, in that some schools gave non-contact time to facilitate effective liaison. Where this was not afforded, there was the complaint that designated teachers were hard to contact and this was attributed to them “not taking the role seriously” (SEU, 2002, p.34).

Fletcher-Campbell *et al.* (2004) undertook research to identify best practice within schools looking at the support of children in public care, in particular focussing on the introduction of the role of designated teacher. In terms of how designated teachers perceived their own role, they focused on the communication and liaison aspects, commenting on being a contact point for looked after pupils and outside agencies. Many designated teachers felt that they facilitated others’ actions and described themselves as part of a team offering support to looked after pupils.

Headteachers were also surveyed for their perceptions of the role of their designated teachers. Their views included responsibilities around liaison, advocacy, monitoring, having an understanding of the difficulties and keeping an overview (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 2004). Pupils’ perspectives on the role of the

designated teacher were less clear. Whilst pupils were not necessarily aware of the existence of this role, when asked for the name of a member of staff to whom they would talk in confidence, approximately half gave the designated teacher's name (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 2004).

In many of the schools participating in the research (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 2004), the role of the designated teacher was described as 'fundamental' (p. 113). There was variation in whether the post holder delegated tasks to other significant members of the school staff, e.g. Year Heads. Multi-agency working was recognised as being of importance, with the *caveat* that –

“While designated teachers may be keen to collaborate with other colleagues, they are dependant on an effective response and cannot achieve the necessary outcomes without mutual respect for the task.” (p. 132)

Even with the initiative of designated teachers and the recognition that pupils will receive maximum opportunities in mainstream schools, other provision needs to be considered for some young people.

Alternative provision at Key Stage 4

“Data show that the average performance of young people in care is significantly lower than national averages for the age cohort and that a disproportionate number of young people are not entered for GCSE or GNVQ at key stage 4 ...”
(Fletcher-Campbell and Archer, 2003, p. 1)

There had been growing concern that the Key Stage 4 provision was not appropriate for all 14 to 16 year old pupils. The Government (DfES, 2002) recognised that some young people:

1. Lost interest in learning before the age of 16;
2. Dropped out of formal learning at 16; and
3. Of those who remained, many failed to reach their full potential.

Not only did it appear that the culture and ethos of the learning establishment needed addressing, including teacher expectation, to maximise effective learning but the content of the curriculum contributed to some young people becoming disaffected.

For looked after children and young people, Bhabra *et al.* (2002) commented that –

“For older groups, the general opinions were that children of GCSE age who had ‘missed a great deal of their education’ may benefit from either a special college placement or work experience.” (p.17)

There had been a growing interest in alternative curriculum programmes for pupils at Key Stage 4. The National Foundation for Educational Research (Cullen, 2000a) undertook a project which explored and described the characteristics of such programmes and assessed the extent to which they were effective in helping young people to view mainstream education and training more positively, and in creating routes to post-16 education, training or employment.

Significant numbers of looked after young people followed an alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4, as evidenced by a research project on the achievement at Key Stage 4 of young people in public care. This found that, of the cohort (377), almost half did not follow the relevant exam courses at Key Stage 4. Of the half that did not, half of them followed an alternative curriculum. Fletcher-Campbell and Archer considered that the educational placements of the study cohort were not always of benefit to them but were expedient for the adults seeking solutions (Fletcher-Campbell and Archer, 2003).

Cullen *et al.* (2000) reported that for effective implementation of an alternative curriculum programme, there had to be acceptance that ‘the problem’ was located within the school itself. This supported the view of Dyson and Millward (1994), writing about special needs practice and provision in mainstream secondary schools:

“If students fail to learn, it is not because they are learning failures; it is because the school has failed to release their learning potential.” (1994, p.13)

The other perspective on ‘the problem’ situates it with the pupil, whose behaviour is seen to be unacceptable, necessitating that s/he was catered for outside of the school (Cullen, 2000a). The nature of the alternative programme offered is often influenced by the perspective adopted. The perspectives on ‘the problem’ are not dichotomous but situated along a continuum. There was recognition that schools were dynamic organisations and evidence of movement along the exclusion-inclusion continuum was observed in schools in the NFER project (Cullen, 2000a).

Dyson and Millward (1994) purported that there were two major developmental tasks for schools. The first was to enhance their own capacity to ensure that students were offered rich and stimulating learning experiences. The second was to develop students’ confidence in themselves as learners so that they could take maximum advantage of these opportunities to learn. Cullen (2000a) emphasised the importance of thinking about the outcomes of alternative curriculum programmes in relation to inclusion. She stated that, in inclusion terms, young people should be given opportunities to demonstrate their abilities, be shown respect as young adults and be offered a realistic chance to make a successful transition from school. Any intervention that left young people ‘at the bottom of the heap’ was not good enough (Cullen, 2000a).

The NFER (2000) research also examined multi-agency collaboration to ‘create’ the alternative curriculum programmes. Cullen concluded that –

“... work on social exclusion has shown that no one agency can tackle on its own the inter-linked problems manifested in that social exclusion”. (Cullen, 2000b, p.7)

From this research, there was recognition that the best of the alternative programmes could and did improve life chances but were not a ‘quick fix’ for social exclusion (Cullen, 2000b).

The Government has recognised that ages 14 to 19 marks a critical phase in young people's lives. Some become disaffected before reaching the end of statutory schooling. In terms of 'traditional achievement', within the general school population (GCSE results 2002):

- (i) Nearly half of the young people did not achieve five good GCSEs
- (ii) More than half of the young people did not achieve good GCSEs in English and mathematics
- (iii) 5% left without a single GCSE pass

(DfES, 2002)

For young people in public care the targets for 2004 were:

- a) 15% to achieve five good GCSEs
 - b) 75% to gain one GCSE or NVQ pass
- (DoH, 1998)

These target figures were obviously well below the levels that the Government was concerned about for the general population of young people, and most local authorities were not achieving the targets for looked after young people. Good alternative curriculum provision would appear to be beneficial for many young people in public care to improve their educational experience and improve their life chances. The Government Paper "14-19" recognised that young people with difficult personal, family or social circumstances required help to overcome problems. Such support should also raise aspirations and motivation, to overcome barriers to learning (DfES, 2002). The Government's view was that there was a need to create a clearer and more appropriate curriculum and framework for the 14-19 phase, which would develop and extend all young people to enable them to achieve their full potential, ready for life and work in the 21st century (DfES, 2002).

Hopefully, the development of appropriate alternative curricula would ensure continuity and progression and the opportunity to gain qualifications that are

recognised for further/higher education and within the workplace. Some of the previous alternative curricula provision was viewed by the young people as –

“ ... boring and worthless, recognising that they were being given short change educationally.” (Fletcher-Campbell, 1997)

Fletcher-Campbell (1997) reported that carers felt that alternative projects should be run under the auspices of the local education authority –

- i. to give them links with mainstream provision so that young people could access it, if and when appropriate, and
- ii. to ensure quality of staffing and work programmes.

Conclusion

The literature demonstrates a remarkable consensus amongst researchers and policy makers about the educational difficulties of young people in public care and the possible causality of this. The sections on attachment and post traumatic stress identify the underlying difficulties and the manifestation of behaviours as a result of these disorders. This seems a deterministic view. However, it is countered by the resilience literature that offers some hope that not all children who have either lacked good parenting or who have endured abuse or neglect will present the same problems. Also the theory on this promotes education as a protective factor that fosters resilience.

The role of the school is examined in improving the educational attainment and life chances of looked after children. The literature on the ethos and culture of the schools highlight the environment that is conducive to teachers adopting a caring attitude that has been shown to contribute to an improvement in the achievements of young people in the care system. Alternative curricula at Key Stage 4 are examined as an initiative that can improve the life chances of this vulnerable group.

The implementation of the role of designated teacher from the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (2000) is the initiative that appears to encapsulate the remedies to the identified barriers, in that it promotes multi-agency

working, information sharing and provides the caring individual, advocate and trainer for other school staff. This study attempts to explore the implementation and effectiveness of multi-agency collaboration/co-operation, focusing on the contribution of a sample of designated teachers. The next section explores the research methodology most appropriate to examine this topic.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the introduction of “Quality Protects” (DoH, 1998), the Government has used quantitative methods to evaluate local authorities in terms of the targets set for improvements in the academic performance of looked after children. These are based on SATs/GCSE results, in addition to data on exclusions, attendance and post-16 opportunities. Local authorities were required to provide baseline information on educational attainment shortly after the Circular was published and then annually (towards targets for 2003). This was unlikely to allow sufficient lead time to achieve the improvement required at Key Stage 4. In addition, within this study, there would be difficulties with using such measures, due to the small size of Shiretown’s population of looked after children undertaking SATs/GCSEs in any one year and the methods of reporting the data. With the small cohorts, one child can represent a difference of 10-20%. Therefore, it appears unlikely that the data required would indicate any changes in their school experience, as a result of the role of the designated teacher in contributing to collaborative practices. These data may demonstrate an association between variables but no causal relationships, or insight into the nature of the association(s), could be established. Pinker (1973) summed this up:

“[In British] social policy and administration we begin with fact-finding and end in moral rhetoric, still lacking those explanatory theories which might show the process as a whole and reveal the relations of the separate problems to one another.” (p. 12)

Sogunro (2002) asserted that the methodology for any study should be determined by the purposes of the research and different methods could be used separately or in concert with each other, given that quantitative and qualitative methods had different but complementary roles to play in a research process and outcome. For this research, the use of the research methodology is based on the following –

- i. The research question;

- ii. What evidence addresses the research question?
- iii. Who has/where is the evidence?
- iv. How can this evidence be accessed?

Whilst this was the framework for devising the methodology and selecting the research tools for this piece of research, there needed to be an awareness of what the literature indicated in methodological selection. Whilst acknowledging the fact that some major differences existed between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, especially in the nature of their data and methods for collecting and analysing data, Punch (1998) believed that these differences should not obscure the similarities in logic, which makes combining the approaches possible. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) supported the view that there is compatibility between qualitative and quantitative methods and commented that this is manifested in much educational research. The use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches or paradigms has been labelled ‘mixed methods’ or ‘mixed methodology’ or ‘methodological mixes’ (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

Eisner (1981) commented that –

“The field of education in particular needs to avoid methodological monism. Our problems need to be addressed in as many ways as will bear fruit.” (p.9)

Given the very different ages and circumstances of children/young people when they are taken into public care, it is likely that any difficulties that impact on their educational achievements are complex and multi-dimensional. Clearly this is not only affected by the factors that contribute to them becoming looked after but also by the type and stability of the care placement(s). Of course, the best outcome is that the children do not experience any difficulties and achieve in line with the general population. Given that looked after children are not a homogeneous group, it does not appear to be sufficient to attempt to measure changes/improvements by outcome, expressed in simplistic, quantitative terms.

“Different paradigms each focus attention on different aspects of the situation and so multimethodology is necessary to deal

effectively with the full richness of the real world.” (Mingers and Brocklesby, 1997, p. 492)

Case studies can be based on any mix of qualitative and quantitative methodology (Yin, 1994). Yin proposed case study as a preferred method in examining contemporary events-

“... when relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated. The case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian’s repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing.” (Yin, 1994, p.8)

Stake (2000) supported the view that case studies are useful in the study of human affairs because they are “down-to-earth and attention holding”. He refuted that they are not a suitable basis for generalization, stating that –

“Case studies will often be the preferred method of research because they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization.” (Stake, 2000, p.19)

However, there is more consensus for relatability and replicability being the critical elements for case study than for generalizability (Yin, 1994; Gomm *et al.*, 2000).

Given that a case study methodology was seen to be appropriate for researching corporate parenting, focusing on the role of the designated teacher, this format was used, employing “mixed research methods”. This approach was designed to explore whether there was evidence of ‘joined up’ working and whether this had resulted in an enhancement in the educational experience of looked after pupils.

Yin (1994) believed that a major strength of case study data collection was the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence, as expressed in figure 3.1.

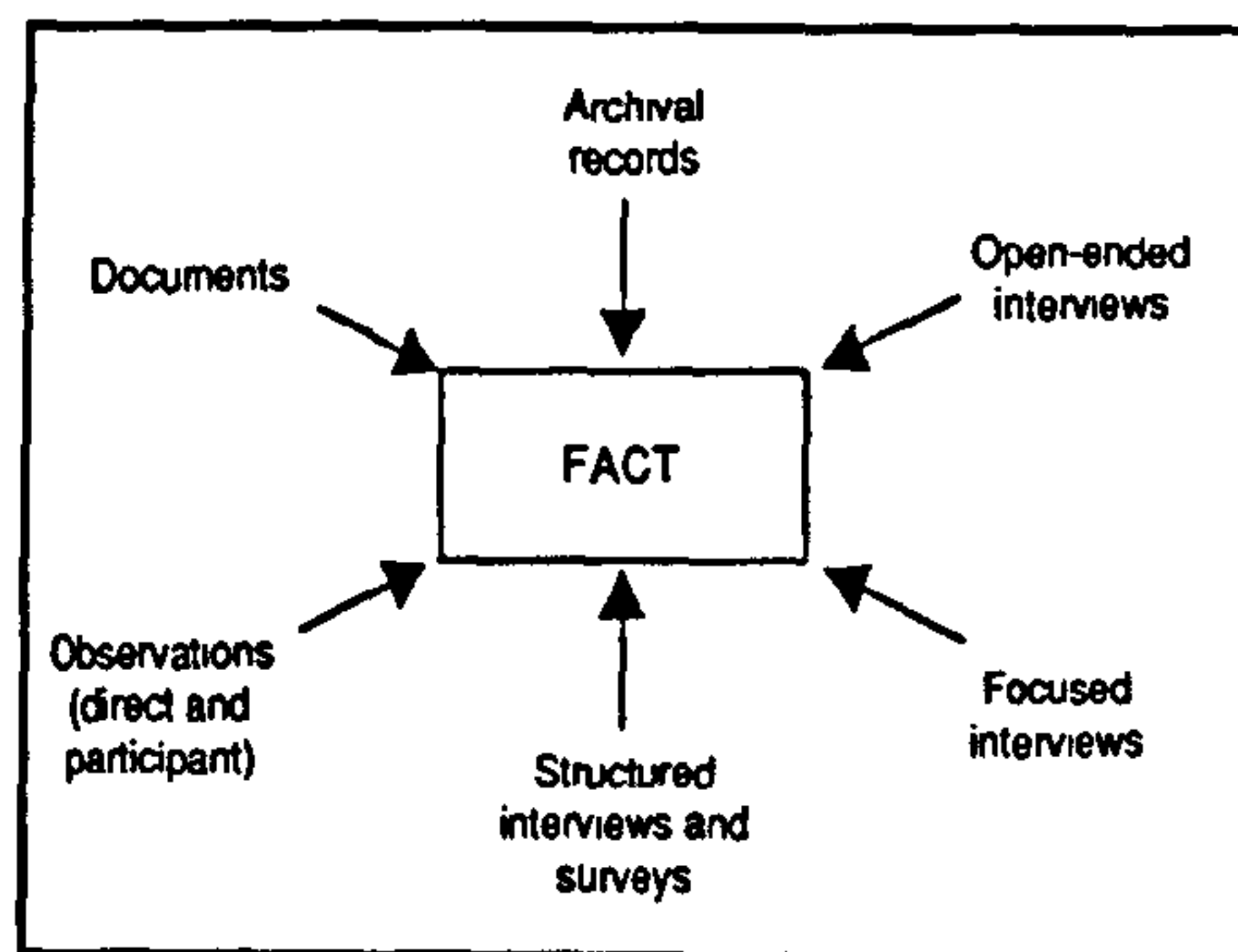


Figure 3.1.

**CONVERGENCE OF MULTIPLE
SOURCES OF EVIDENCE**

(Yin, 1994, p. 93)

“The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioural issues. However the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation.” (Yin, 1994, p. 92)

The use of case study methodology to undertake this research is in line with other work around initiatives to improve the education of looked after children/young people, many of which had been undertaken in this way (see, for example, Fletcher-Campbell, 1997; Jackson and Sachdev, 2001).

As Teacher/Advisor for Shiretown’s looked after children, I was in a unique position to be able to undertake this research in that the role required that I provided a conduit between Social Services and Education /schools and undertook liaison with other agencies to resolve educational difficulties for individual children/young people. Whilst the dual roles of researcher and practitioner could be seen as contributing to researcher bias, Ruby (2005) considers that research is an important part of quality practice but commented that there is often a gap between those who are conduct research and those who are engaged in practice. He stated that the benefit of the practitioner research was that –

“The practitioner often understands his or her clients in terms of reasons, intentions, biographical events, choices, moral and legal responsibilities, etc. (Ruby, 2005, p. 59)

In terms of enhancing practice, Ruby (2005) commented that, by the process of research, the practitioner modifies systems as new understanding produces better results than the old.

For those engaged in affecting an improvement to the life chances of looked after children, the Guidance (DfEE/DoH, 2000) appeared to present very real opportunities for achieving this. I felt that a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the collaboration required by the concept of corporate parenting could indicate opportunities and systems to promote this, to attempt to improve the educational experiences young people in the care of Shiretown Borough Council.

Research questions

The literature and choice of research methodology indicate that, to undertake a study of the contribution of designated teachers to corporate parenting for Shiretown's population of young people in public care, the following questions needed to be addressed:

1. What were the factors in the schools in the sample that contributed to or inhibited effective multi-agency co-operation to improve the educational experience of Shiretown's population of young people in care?
2. Within the sample schools, did the designated teachers of pupils in public care facilitate schools engaging in this process?
3. Given that factors had been identified that accounted for/contributed to the under-achievement in education of looked after children, what solutions were effective in overcoming these within the sample schools?
4. How could designated teachers, in the sample schools, address the needs of looked after children to improve their educational experience?
5. What were the characteristics of designated teachers, in the sample schools, who facilitated effective multi-agency co-operation/collaboration, in terms of training, experience and position?

Study Design

The framework to explore these research questions is summarised below:

Research questions	Evidence	Data source	Research methods
What were the factors in the schools in the sample that contributed to or inhibited effective multi-agency co-operation to improve the educational experience of Shiretown's population of young people in care?	Examples of liaison with other professionals, carers. Multi-agency involvement in Personal Education Plans Measures of inclusive schools	Designated teachers Carers Social workers Young people Teacher/Advisor for LAC Ofsted reports	Interviews Surveys Analysis of secondary data Documentary analysis
Within the sample schools, did/how did the designated teacher of pupils in public care facilitate schools engaging in this process?	Communication systems.	Social workers Designated teachers Teacher/Advisor for LAC	Surveys Interviews
Given that factors have been identified that account for/contribute to the under-achievement in education of looked after children, what strategies were effective in overcoming these in the sample schools?	National assessment tests (SATs and GCSEs) Attendance figures Exclusion data Personal Education Plans Pastoral Support Plans Access to alternative curricula at KS 4	Designated teachers Young people	Analysis of secondary data Documentary analysis Interviews
How did designated teachers, in the sample schools, address the needs of looked after children to improve their educational experience?	Knowledge of the difficulties/needs of LAC Frequency of liaison with LA pupils Attendance at training sessions for designated teachers	Trainers for twilight training sessions/ conference for designated teachers Designated teachers Young people	Analysis of secondary data Documentary analysis Interviews
What were the characteristics of designated teachers, in the sample schools, who attempted to facilitate effective multi-agency co-operation/collaboration, in terms of training, experience and position?	a) Perceptions of others in terms of effective co-operation/collaboration b) Profiles of individual designated teachers	a) Social workers Teacher/Advisor for LAC b) Designated teachers	a) Interviews Surveys b) Interviews

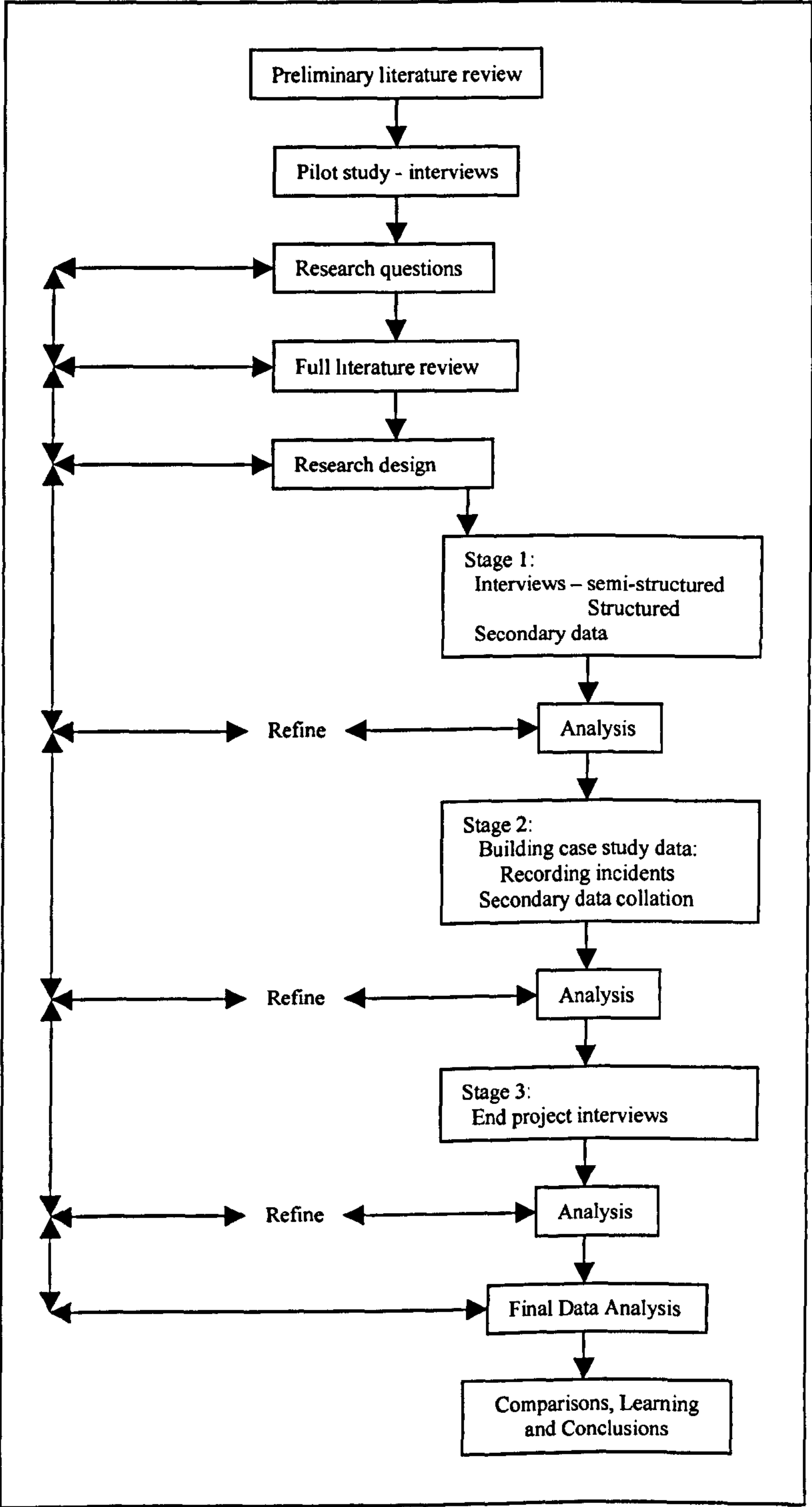
The study employed case study approach to explore the educational experiences of Shiretown's looked after young people in five sample schools (details of sample in Chapter 4), with particular focus on the contribution of corporate parenting as facilitated by the role of the designated teacher. Specifically, interview techniques were used to capture the views of the participants. Semi-structured or structured interviews were employed at the beginning of the study to collect data from designated teachers and social workers. Care and school histories of the looked after pupils in the schools were compiled and revised. Secondary data was collated that evidenced the educational experiences of the young people in the

study, e.g. Personal Education Plans, SATs/GCSE results, exclusions, attendance, etc. Incidents of collaboration or non-collaboration were recorded and analysed in terms of why they occurred, i.e. what were the contextual details? A sample of the young people were interviewed to capture their perceptions on the effectiveness of collaboration or need for more support from those involved in corporate parenting.

Interviews with the designated teachers and social workers were conducted at the end of the research study, to attempt to identify any changes in their perceptions over the duration of the study and what, if any, progress had been achieved. This also provided further supporting evidence for the main findings from the case studies.

The overall design of this study is illustrated in the research map (Figure 3.2,) below:

Figure 3.2
Research Map



Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data: Questionnaire interviews

Abrams (1951) commented on the use of a questionnaire approach, in terms of describing it as -

“ ... a process by which quantitative facts are collected about the social composition and activities. Its findings could be expressed in numerical form and they are usually utilitarian, carried out as an indispensable first step in measuring the dimensions of a social problem ...” (p.2)

Although questionnaires could be criticised for failing to give any insight into the causal relationships between variables identified (Pinker, 1973), given that the focus of the research study was to be designated teachers, this method would enable data to be collected from a larger number of social workers than could be achieved by qualitative methodology, e.g. semi-structured interviews. Also, given the author's position within Social Services, the possibility for social workers to anonymise their responses could facilitate them providing more honest views.

The questionnaires were piloted to ascertain whether the questions produced the data to address the research questions.

Qualitative data: Interviews

For the purposes of this research, whilst questionnaires were used to collect data from a larger number of respondents, interviews were employed to provide more detailed data. These interviews followed the methodology described by Moser and Kalton (1971) as *guided* or *focused* interviews, also called semi-structured interviews. These, whilst giving the respondent a good deal of freedom, introduce a set of topics in a more or less systematic way. The questions are open ones, designed to encourage the respondent to talk freely around each topic. This interviewing departs from the inflexibility of formal, structured methods, whilst giving the interview a form that ensures that relevant topics are discussed and allowing respondents opportunity to develop their views (Moser and Kalton,

1971). Using this approach, interview schedules are constructed to include topics that encourage the interviewee to give their perceptions on the areas where information is required. In doing this, there needs to be an awareness that the language used and the way in which interviewees are 'invited' to respond could shape their responses, both in terms of their understanding and in terms of the interviewer's biases. Language used is intended to be clear and unambiguous, so that it can be understood by the respondents. To avoid difficulties in understanding, 'probes' are included under each heading, which are used either to illuminate the question or to focus the conversation, if necessary, and to ensure that there is an adequate scope in response (OU, 1996a). The questions are phrased to elicit "concrete rather than abstract responses" (Nias, 1991, p. 134) by asking for examples of behaviours or situations.

Additionally, as well as the possibility in the development of the schedule, there is the potential of bias in conducting the interview. With semi-structured or focused interviews the flexibility afforded by the informal approach gets to the heart of the respondent's opinion better than set questions (Moser and Kalton, 1971).

However, it is this informality that can give greater scope to the personal influence and bias of the interviewer, in that the answers given by the respondents can be affected by the social and personal characteristics of the interviewer (OU, 1996a). Respondents can attempt to please the interviewer and tailor their responses to attempt to match their perceptions in order to achieve this. As an interviewer, I was aware that I should adopt a neutral position during the interview and, to achieve this, needed to be aware of not only the content and tone of dialogue but also non-verbal communication clues. Also interviewees can form perceptions of the interviewer from how the interview is conducted and make assessments about his/her values and stance. The latter will be based on age, gender, race and class. Hopefully, awareness to all these factors avoided the situation where, as an interviewer, I constituted a major barrier to honest response (OU, 1996a).

The purpose of the interview schedule is to produce data that can be analysed to illuminate the research questions (OU, 1996a). The schedules need to be tested, both in terms of producing quality data and in the usefulness of the analysis in

relation to the research question. Pilot semi-structured interviews, were carried out to evaluate the schedules, in terms of appropriateness of -

Language: Were the respondents able to understand questions without additional information?

If probes were necessary, were they sufficient to refocus/illuminate the question?

Content: Were all topics/questions relevant to gather the data required?
Could any questions be omitted?

Did the topics/questions produce the data required, i.e. was the response content relevant and in line with expectations?

Were additional topics/questions/probes required?

Order: Should there have been any regrouping or re-ordering of topics?

Target population:

Could the schedule be used effectively with all interviewees, in view of their training/qualifications/experience?

Audio-recording the interviews (with the interviewees' permission) enabled the production of *verbatim* transcripts, which were then sent to the respondents for validation and permission to include in the research study. The *verbatim* transcripts also allowed a thorough analysis of the content. As stated by Moser and Kalton (1971) -

“The point of informal approach is to obtain a more complete picture of ... a person's attitude than a formal interview would. If this gain is not to be sacrificed, the analysis must retain a fair amount of detail ... “ (p. 301)

In terms of analysis, ‘theme’ analysis was employed (OU, 1996a), whereby, through careful scrutiny of the data, it was possible to identify a set of categories that were relevant to the focus of the study. Once this set of themes had been

identified, it was possible to code and allocate further data to the categories, to facilitate the emergence of new themes, the clarification of old ones and development of relationships amongst the categories (OU, 1996a).

Case studies

Case studies were compiled that evidenced collaboration or lack of it by those involved in corporate parenting, particularly focusing on the role of the designated teachers in the sample schools. In my role as Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children for Shiretown, I was involved in liaising with schools, social workers and carers to attempt to resolve educational difficulties experienced by any of the young people in the care of the Borough Council. In line with social work case recording, these interventions were recorded on the case file on the next working day, if that was practicable and possible. For social care purposes -

“The use of information required for recording the facts and events of children's lives, for assessing the needs of children and monitoring their developmental progress is fundamental to good, safe practice and better outcomes.” (Every Child Matters, 2006, p.1)

The case studies reported in this research were compiled and presented from the case notes.

In terms of research, case studies can present difficulties in reliability and validity. The reliability of research – consistent findings if the study were repeated – does not ensure validity. Yin (1994) suggested that the overall quality of a case study report is related to the overall quality of the study. He suggested that this could be achieved by allowing participants and informants in the case to review the report. The case notes, from which the reports are derived, are on the client case file, which is managed by the caseholding social worker. In addition, the case notes relating to collaborative practice would be sent to the designated teacher. Therefore, two of the participants/informants review the notes. It should also be remembered that social care case notes have to be a factual account of the event, with some interpretation and analysis (Kagle, 1983). The audience for these notes

does not only include other social care workers but a client can have access to their file and recordings may need to be made available to the Court service for the purpose of Care Proceedings.

The use of these case studies is justified in that with case study research, the quality is improved by incorporating a wide variety of sources (Yin, 1994), so that the study's findings are –

“... based on the convergence of information from different sources, not quantitative or qualitative data alone” (Yin, 1994, p. 91)

with each element providing a measure of the same phenomenon.

Secondary data

Quantitative data were collected which identified the educational achievement of Shiretown's looked after population. This was in the form of the statistics required by the government on national examinations/tests. Data was also collated relating to individual pupils' attitudes to education, indicated by attendance, periods of exclusion, etc. Throughout the study period, for individual pupils in the research sample, recordings were made of critical incidents/episodes in their school lives, particularly in terms of collaboration/co-operation between those involved in corporate parenting, focusing on the role of the designated teacher.

Ethical considerations

In the research design, there were considerable ethical issues that needed to be addressed. Dockrell (1988) outlined the ethical considerations in relation to customers, colleagues, community and, for the subjects, on the questions of honesty of intent and confidentiality. More specifically, The British Psychological Society had produced guidelines on “Ethical principles for research with human subjects” (2000), which covered such issues as the psychological consequences for subjects of the research; deception concerning the purpose of the investigation; encroachment on privacy; confidentiality; care needed when research involves children, etc.

Specifically on the question of consent, The British Psychological Society advised that –

“Whenever possible, the investigator should inform all participants of the objectives of the investigation. The investigator should inform the participants of all aspects of the research or intervention that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate.” (2000, p.8)

The British Psychological Society advised that consent should be obtained from parents where research involves any person under 16 years of age. Parental responsibility for looked after children remains with natural parent(s) if a child is voluntarily ‘accommodated’ and can be shared between natural parent(s) and Social Services if the child is on a Care Order, unless the court has refused parental contact. The Children Act (1989) and “Working Together” (DfEE/DoH, 1997) recommended that parental consent be sought for information sharing. Social Services obtains consent to share educational information between schools and the department. For the purpose of interviewing children/young people for this project, information was sent to both natural parent(s), unless the child was in an adoptive placement, and foster/residential carers. With looked after children, there can be difficult relationships between natural parents and social workers and a low response rate could result if written permission is sought. To overcome this, specialist legal opinion advised that implied permission could be assumed if there was no objection. The young people to be included in the case studies were approached for permission; similarly with the adults. This was done by writing to the individuals and then following up with a telephone call. For the young people, a copy of the letter was sent to the carer, with the request that they give the young person the opportunity to discuss the request. This was done to facilitate understanding and/or to overcome literacy difficulties. In addition, the carer could advocate for the young person and inform the researcher if s/he did not wish to be interviewed.

For the young people and the adults involved in the research study, it was essential that confidentiality was respected. To achieve this, it was necessary to disguise

individual persons and institutions by the use of fictional names, depersonalising the cases or fragmenting the data. Interviewees were assured that this would be done, to prevent their identification.

Del Busso (2004) commented that many looked after children and young people may have experienced circumstances in which they had been disempowered. Therefore, it is essential that research does not reproduce experiences of disempowerment. The ideal is to create a research relationship with the young people where power is distributed equally. Whilst this may be difficult to achieve, the researcher should create conditions in which participants are validated and treated with respect. To facilitate this –

“... the researcher’s primary role is to be explicit and reflexive about their own positioning, the interview encounters, interpretation and analysis ...” (Del Busso, 2004, p.9)

Del Busso (2004) felt that the aim of collecting service user feedback was to empower them and listen to their perspectives in order to develop better services. She felt that qualitative interview methods were particularly suited for this purpose for several reasons but particularly because “qualitative interviews have the potential for ‘giving voice’” (2004, p. 7) and, thus, empowering the respondent. This view may be somewhat idealistic, in that improvement may not be an immediate result of research. There is also a valuable role that research can fulfil in increasing understanding, which is a prerequisite for, but not necessarily an implement of, changing circumstances.

During the research, I was aware of the ethical implications for this group of vulnerable young people and those professionals working with them and adhered to all the considerations outlined above.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH STUDY : INITIAL PHASE

Sample selection

My post as Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children enabled me to have access to information about Shiretown's looked after young people and access to the schools that they attended. In selecting the schools to be included in the case studies, I examined the educational provision for Shiretown's looked after population. In 2002, Shiretown's cohort (90) of looked after young people of statutory school age were pupils at the following categories of schools/educational placements (numbers shown):

- A. Mainstream primary schools (33)
- B. Mainstream secondary schools (26)
- C. LEA day special schools (16)
- D. LEA residential special schools (2)
- E. Independent residential schools (6)
- F. Alternative educational provision (education of children other than at school) (14)
- G. Further education colleges (3)

Whilst there were some difficulties in maintaining the placements of young people in primary schools, it was unlikely that any primary school had more than one looked after young person from Shiretown Borough Council, unless there was a sibling group. Additionally, the secondary school years appeared to be more difficult in terms of looked after young people achieving at levels appropriate to their age (DfEE/DoH, 2000) and in preventing educational placement breakdown. In view of this, I decided to concentrate my study on secondary provision. Given that this research was on a small sample of schools, concentrating on the secondary sector would not introduce another variable, i.e. differences in primary

provision. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to base this study on the following schools/education provision –

- (i) Two designated teachers from mainstream secondary schools.
- (ii) Two designated teachers from special schools.
- (iii) One designated teacher from alternative educational provision (education other than at school [EOTAS]).

For a short description of the individual schools see Appendix 2.

Start of study period (Spring/Summer 2002) – perceptions of designated teachers and social workers

Semi-structured interviews with designated teachers

It was decided to use semi-structured interviews as the method of collecting data from this sample of designated teachers, to determine perceptions about –

- i. the difficulties in education experienced by the young people for whom they had responsibility;
- ii. how to effect improvements in their educational experience;
- iii. examples of effective collaboration, by those involved in corporate parenting, in which they had been involved;
- iv. barriers to effective collaboration; and
- v. ideas on establishing an effective framework for collaboration.

The intention was that information from these interviews would highlight the difficulties that existed for schools, in working in co-operation with others involved in corporate parenting, to indicate where this had been successfully achieved and to explore ideas for future improvement.

This part of the research was an essential starting point in addressing the first two research questions that explored the establishment of multi-agency co-operation and the role of the designated teacher in engaging schools in corporate parenting.

The need for establishing frameworks to facilitate effective multi-agency working had been highlighted (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002; Holman and Arcus, 1987). Also there was some recognition that the success of such working could be achieved by committed individuals or ‘champions’ (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999). The interview script was designed to capture the views of the designated teachers on these topics (see Appendix 3).

To pilot the interview schedule and to explore whether or not the issues of having looked after pupils on roll was different for primary schools, it was decided to interview a primary designated teacher. Whilst this difference in provision could have resulted in the pilot not being tested for suitability for secondary designated teachers, it was felt that the general areas of discussion would not generate a discrepancy. If the pilot did show contextual differences in the primary and secondary schools experiences, the research may need to reflect this. The primary school selected was one that appeared to be representative of those who had looked after pupils on roll, in that the school had two pupils – one from Shiretown and another from another local authority. The designated teacher in the sample primary school was approached to test the interview schedule.

Following the pilot interview, it was felt that the schedule was effective in respect of the language used, the order and the appropriateness of the questions to the target population. From the preliminary analysis of the data derived from the interview schedule, it appeared that it resulted in some valuable and interesting information. Therefore, as the pilot interview did not result in any changes to the interview schedule, the process for undertaking the interviews followed the same format for all of them, as described below.

Each of the six prospective interviewees (pilot and five sample designated teachers) were approached to seek their agreement to participate in the research. The author had met all of them before in a professional capacity and felt that it was important to be honest and open with them. Therefore, it was explained that the interview that was proposed was not part of a professional role but as part of an external course of study although it would, of course, inform work practice. All six designated teachers agreed to be interviewed and for the interviews to be

audio-recorded. One-hour appointments were made for each interview, which were arranged to be totally separate from any contact that the author had with them in a professional capacity. This was done to minimise the distortion of their responses due to their reaction to the professional role. All of the interviews were undertaken at the work bases of the interviewees.

As recommended in *The Methodology Handbook* (OU, 1991), to minimise the intrusiveness of an audio-cassette recorder, the technology was kept simple and unobtrusive by using a small, battery-operated, cassette recorder with a built in microphone. Whilst it was recognised that, with this sort of machine, quality of recording would be lost, it was felt that it was important in terms of eliciting honest and open answers from the respondents. To overcome the difficulties with transcription from a potentially poor recording, detailed field notes were taken during the interview. This also enabled details of any significant non-verbal communication to be noted, that would not be available via the audio-recording.

The interviews were conducted as planned. Some difficulties were encountered with the audio recordings, as detailed below:

- Interview with CH: The audio recorder failed to record a large part of the beginning of the interview.
- Interview with JP: Failure to notice that one side of the cassette was full and, therefore, a part of the interview was not recorded. This was corrected for the last part of the interview.

For both of these interviews, the field notes became invaluable.

A schedule had been devised for the semi-structured interviews, consisting of eight topics together with probes designed to illuminate the question, to refocus the discussion or extrapolate the information being sought. Although the interviews followed the schedule, the author amended it particularly in response to the interviewees' comments, e.g. as a result of getting an unexpected answer or following up some interesting line of discussion from the interviewee. Whilst this obviously impacted on consistency between the interviews, it was felt that this followed the tactic employed by Nias (1991), where she commented that:

“ ... (I made) the question sound as natural as possible, since I believed the interviews were likely to yield maximum information if they resembled open-ended conversations. So, I altered my wording to suit the circumstances of the individual or the topic under discussion and did my best to introduce my query smoothly into the flow of the talk.” (p. 134)

Following the interviews, typed *verbatim* transcripts were produced. To obtain respondent validation, in terms of their accuracy, a copy of their interview was given to the interviewees, requesting that they sign it to confirm that it was a true representation of the interviews (OU, 1996a). Additionally, this process sought permission for the author to use the material in the research project. This was in line with Dockerill’s (1998) comments that all concerned in the research process must have a chance to read the material before it is published, even if individual persons or institutions are disguised (OU, 1996b). Although he was less clear about whether–

“ ... they also have the right to require the removal of any material about themselves to which they object even if this were to weaken the report to the point of rendering it valueless” (OU 1996b, p. 63)

In the event, all six respondents signed the transcripts as a true representation of the discussions, without any alteration or deletion and gave their permission for the material to be used. Therefore, the author did not have to decide whether the interviewees had this ‘right’.

Findings

The interview schedule was designed after reviewing the literature on the topics impacting on the education of young people in public care. Therefore, themes to explore in the interviews had already been identified. Having obtained accurate transcripts of the interviews, the next stage was to attempt an initial analysis in

terms of identifying the major themes emerging from them. This was undertaken by a preliminary and primary analysis, where the data was examined -

“... highlighting certain points in the text and making comments in the margins to identify important points, note contradictions and inconsistencies, common themes emerging, and so on.” (OU, 1996a, p. 103)

The six scripts were annotated accordingly (for an example, see Appendix 4).

From the annotated scripts, it was possible to identify that there were obvious areas that related and overlapped and the next stage was to identify these and then construct a method to summarise the data. A table was constructed to enable the data to be marshalled behind the categories and sub-categories (see Appendix 5). From this tabulation it was possible to identify the following major themes, which aligned with the interview schedule:

1. Insight into needs/difficulties of children in public care (CiPC)
2. Understanding of other professionals' roles/difficulties
3. Examples of previous co-operation
4. Opportunities and desire to work collaboratively/share information
5. Mechanisms and framework for information sharing

The following section is a descriptive analysis of the data.

1. Insight into needs/difficulties of Children in Public Care (CiPC)

Only two of the designated teachers directly indicated an understanding that the difficulties in education experienced by these children pre-dated their episodes in public care –

[In relation to attendance difficulties] “... in the past they haven't and, I think that certainly impacts on their learning,

when perhaps with their parents or with whoever they were with beforehand, they weren't actually getting regular access ...” (JP, 2002)

[In relation to parenting] “These kids have had power put on them – used on them – but inappropriate power. ... [The] homes are different ... that is why the children are like this ...” (EL, 2002)

However, a further three had some insight into the difficulties experienced by children/young people in the care system. There was recognition that, not being able to remain in the family home, could result in young people feeling rejected which could subsequently impact on their self-esteem –

“Looked after children come in with low expectations of themselves and low self-esteem. ... One of the bits of disaffection is that they feel that people don't care about them.” (JP, 2002)

“Establishing positive relationships in lives where so many relationships had broken down, leaving them feeling rejected.” (CH, 2002)

One of the designated teachers had definite perceptions about cross-cultural care, which was identified as contributing to a young person experiencing ‘an identity crisis about background’, which led to confusion as to “who she was”. (CH, 2002)

Two of the designated teachers (SG and ZL) identified that poor parenting and admission to the care system could leave the young people without a significant person/role model in their lives, both to value education and celebrate their achievements -

“ ... they are disadvantaged. ... they do not have an anchor point ... they don't have, necessarily, all the role models that we require for accessing the full range of learning.” (SG, 2002)

“There is nobody going to go that extra mile with them, if their parents haven’t. It takes a ... certain type of foster parent or carer of looked after to do that with them.” (ZL, 2002)

SG (2002) highlighted the impact on the educational achievement of the looked after children/young people that these difficulties could cause by stating that –

“... the emotional baggage they are carrying means that they can be varied in their studying.” (SG, 2002)

She was linking this to the inflexibility of the traditional education system of GCSE and “A” level examinations, which she felt needed consistent application on the part of the students and would, therefore, disadvantage pupils who could not conform to this. This was reinforced by another designated teacher who cited that alternative curricula for Key Stage 4 pupils was working well in preventing young people from ‘dropping out’ of education.

Two of the respondents directly referred to the importance of education as a means of improving the life chances of young people –

“ ... not having education and no qualifications and all this lot but it is insult to injury, isn’t it, because what is happening is that they are missing out on something essential that everybody else has ... it has to be valued ...” (ZL, 2002)

“ ... education is a prerequisite if you are going to have serious earning power.” (SG, 2002)

Given that regular attendance at school had been highlighted as a difficulty for looked after young people (DfEE/DoH, 2000), only two of the teachers mentioned the relationship between attendance and academic success.

[In relation to young people in a children’s home] “... get them to school ... we can’t work out anything unless they are in school.” (EL, 2002)

“... all the latest research shows that every 10% of absence equates to a lower grade at GCSE.” (SG, 2002)

The only designated teacher for a primary school had experience that looked after young people were “getting to school” but she acknowledged that this “bucks the trend” (JP, 2002).

2. Understanding of other professionals’ roles/difficulties

There was recognition that the designated teachers did not have a clear understanding of the roles of other professionals involved in corporate parenting or the systems that operated within children’s homes or the Children and Families Division of Shiretown. (CH, SG, SB, EL, 2002). This could lead to difficulties in communication because of various activities undertaken by workers during the day, which resulted in teachers being available for liaison at a time when other workers were not. One of the designated teachers (SG, 2002) described it as ‘timetable versus caseload’. To overcome this, five of the designated teachers (CH, SG, SB, EL, ZL, 2002) identified that joint training was necessary to bring together the various professionals involved in corporate parenting, both to gain an understanding of the various roles and responsibilities but also to formulate a system for ‘joined up’ working.

3. Examples of previous co-operation

In response to a direct question about whether they had experienced an example of positive co-operation between a social worker and/or a carer and their school, five of the designated teachers were able to identify at least one example of this, with two of them making several references to it. There were five examples of close liaison with carers, either foster or residential and examples of co-operation or ‘joined up’ working with the social workers.

All the cited examples of carers co-operating with the schools to facilitate a positive outcome for the young person, were from residential child care officers in children’s homes. For one young person, whose behaviour was causing some difficulties in school, the carer accompanied the young person on a school residential holiday to ensure that the individual could be included and to manage the behaviour, to ensure that it was a positive experience (SB, 2002). The other

four were more general in mentioning ongoing co-operative relationships with the schools.

For social workers, the examples were about supporting the school in –

- a) A disciplinary procedure (EL, 2002);
- b) A child protection issue (SB, 2002);
- c) An admission programme for a looked after young person (JP, 2002);
- d) Setting up a review meeting for the young person because the designated teacher felt that she had not got the time to contact everyone involved to set up a meeting (CH, 2002).

Interestingly, the meeting that this designated teacher (CH) was referring to was a statutory review, which is a Social Services' meeting. For these review meetings, teachers may be asked to make a contribution but may not be invited to, unless the young person requests it. As such, it would obviously be a meeting that Social Services would organise. In fact, the social worker concerned was an agency worker who mistakenly involved the school and sent the minutes of the review to them. At this stage the school had not embarked on the Personal Education Plan meetings for its looked after pupils and mistook the statutory review paperwork for a Personal Education Plan!

In terms of where either carers or social workers had been involved with the school, resulting in negative outcomes, one designated teacher (SB, 2002) cited -

- (i) Educational decisions being taken about a group of three looked after siblings by the carer, supported by a neighbouring LEA, without any consultation with the school. There had been no intervention from the social worker because the children were in an adoptive placement. Shiretown LEA had not intervened because the neighbouring LEA had assumed responsibility for funding the statements of these three children almost a year before

the adoption order was made and the young people became their financial responsibility.

- (ii) One social worker's participation had had a negative outcome.

Another designated teacher (JP, 2002) felt that social workers needed to visit schools and demonstrate an interest in the education of looked after pupils.

Two of the designated teachers (EL, CH, 2002) were very critical of the lack of support that the schools received from two children's homes. EL felt that there was not effective communication between the school and one particular children's home. She was also critical that the residential workers did not 'parent' the young people in their care by imposing boundaries, sanctions, etc – what she described as the "positive tactics of parents". CH was critical because the staff at one home had not responded to a request from the school to collect a young person who was behaving inappropriately in school. This was an attempt by the school to avoid an escalation of the behaviour to a degree that necessitated formal disciplinary action. Unfortunately, the lack of co-operation by the home had resulted in the pupil remaining on the school premises and his behaviour escalating to the point where he assaulted staff and was given a fixed-term exclusion.

4. Opportunities and desire to work collaboratively/share information

Although there was criticism and lack of understanding of other professionals' roles and responsibilities, four of the teachers (CH, JP, SB, ZL) recognised that there was a need for multi-agency co-operation to effect an improvement in the educational experiences of looked after children/young people. Five of the interviewees (CH, SG, JP, SB, ZL) expressed a desire to work collaboratively. CH (2002) expressed this as getting "a team together ... [to establish] a uniform approach". Five of them recognised the value of sharing information to—

- a) "... know the reason behind the change in behaviour." (SG 2002)
- b) avoid misunderstandings (EL, 2002)

- c) provide "... a whole cohesive approach". (CH, 2002)
- d) open "...up the line of communication ...". (JP, 2002)
- e) "... make sure that the teacher concerned is aware of the background, is aware of the circumstances, is aware of potential problems that the child might be experiencing." (SB, 2002).

5. Mechanisms and framework for information sharing

Given the difficulties they had experienced in sharing information with other agencies in the past, both in terms of what they were able to share and communication, several of the teachers (five and four, respectively) felt that there was a need for a framework for information sharing and also for communication. There was recognition that named people, both in Social Services and schools, would facilitate this but several of the respondents (CH, SG, EL, ZL) felt that the liaison needed to be incorporated into the existing structures of the school to ensure that it was facilitated and to avoid duplication of tasks. Both mainstream secondary designated teachers thought that the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) should be scheduled for initiating and reviewing at termly meetings, when a block of time (whole or half a day) would be assigned to this. Both of their schools used this system for Pastoral Support Plan meetings. There was recognition that the initial meeting might have to be scheduled separately to facilitate the 20-day completion timescale. Both of the secondary respondents acknowledged that, as designated teachers, they needed to have an overview of all the looked after pupils in their school but that they might not be the most appropriate person to undertake the work with individual pupils in terms of support, monitoring and PEP completion. These were the strategies that these two teachers felt would enable the tasks associated with the role of designated teacher to be undertaken effectively.

Other issues

Although there was not such consensus about the issues, the following were important points that came out of the interviews:

1. SG and ZL both mentioned that although schools wanted to be ‘inclusive’ and work with other agencies to improve the educational experience of young people in public care, league tables militated against this –

“Schools are not judged by how happy their pupils are or by the good behaviour of those pupils, they are judged by the standards – academic results.” (ZL, 2002)

2. Lack of uniformity between local authorities for working with schools/designated teachers for the completion of PEPs, etc. and the difficulties of working with social workers from other authorities that were a long distance from the area where the child lived, i.e. out-of-authority placements. (JP, 2002)

JP was concerned that looked after young people should be able to feel ‘normal’ in school. She felt that, for some children, Personal Education Plans could make “them feel odd” (JP, 2002). She described what the school staff were being asked to do was treat looked after pupils as “normal with abnormal bits tacked on” (JP, 2002). Another of the respondents concurred with this by recognising that looked after children “... want to be ordinary” (ZL, 2002).

Questionnaire for social workers

Government initiatives (DoH, 1998; DfEE/DoH, 2000) have required that social workers prioritise education for looked after children and co-operate with schools/education providers. To explore issues around co-operation between those involved in corporate parenting for Shiretown’s population of young people in public care, it was decided to obtain information on the perceptions and attitudes of social workers relating to their views on education and issues around multi-agency collaboration.

The group targeted, for this information, were Shiretown Borough Council’s social workers who caseheld looked after children/young people of statutory school age. A questionnaire (Appendix 6) was designed to collect data on participants’ perceptions and views relating to:

- The purpose(s) and definition of education.
- The relationship between stability in school and care placement.
- The role of social workers in the education of looked after young people that they work with.
- The importance of educational provision not being changed or, if it is, secured promptly.
- The value of multi-agency working.
- The value of Personal Education Plans and arrangements for implementation.

In addition the knowledge and experience of participants of the role of designated teachers for young people in public care was explored.

In 2002, Shiretown's population of looked after children/young people were case held in five teams –

1. Looked After Children's Team (children for whom the plan was medium to long term care or permanency);
2. Family Support Team (children 0-11 years old, for whom the plan was rehabilitation to home);
3. Adolescent Resource Team (young people 11-16 years old, for whom the plan was rehabilitation to home);
4. Leaving Care Team (Care Leavers - 16+ years old);
5. Disabled Children's Team (children/young people 0-19 years old, on the disabled register).

The majority (63 %) of looked after children who were of statutory school age were case held by the Looked After Children's Team. This team comprised 9 workers who caseheld looked after children/young people – 7 social workers, 2 assistant team managers. Whilst the numbers of looked after children/young people of statutory school age who were case held by the Disabled Children's (22%) and Leaving Care (7%) Teams constituted a relatively small proportion of

their work, it was felt important to seek their views to identify if there were any differences because the focus of their work with the individual young people may have been different. Within these teams there were only a few workers who caseheld looked after children of statutory school age (three in Disabled Children's Team; three in Leaving Care Team). Therefore, the total cohort of workers that I targeted for the collection of this data was 15. [The remaining looked after children cases (9%) were held by two other teams because the decision had been made that the care episode would be short and the young people would return to live with their natural families.]

The questionnaire primarily comprised closed questions, with the only opportunity to give open responses being where further information was needed, e.g. comments. For the closed, pre-coded questions, an answer frame was provided that offered multiple choice answer frameworks. To ensure confidentiality, respondents were not asked to provide their names (although the nature of their role was collected for the purposes of identifying differences in response patterns).

The questionnaire was piloted with two workers from one of the teams not included in this part of the study. The workers both had a small number of looked after children of statutory school age in their caseloads. The questionnaire was piloted to ascertain if the respondents were able to understand the questions in terms of language and content, whether the questions gathered the data required and also the appropriateness of the order. Both respondents reported that they had no difficulty in understanding the questions or responding to them on the answer framework. Therefore, no revisions were made to the format of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were quickly completed by two of the teams, with the Disabled Children's Team workers needing 'persuading' to undertake this task. This may have been due to the fact that the team had 50% unfilled posts. By undertaking some work for the team, it was possible to 'trade' completion of the questionnaires by the three workers. To maximise the response rate, the questionnaires were administered as best suited the different teams, each of which had a different preference:

1. Looked After Children's Team: team members completed paper copies, individually and without discussion, during a 'slot' in a team meeting. This is a practice adopted by the Team Manager when information is required urgently.
2. Leaving Care Team: questionnaire sent, completed and returned electronically. Three questionnaires returned at intervals over a one week period.
3. Disabled Children's Team: Paper copies completed and returned at intervals over four week period.

There was an obvious 'trade off' between uniformity in administration of the questionnaires and completion rate. However, the risks associated with this level of inconsistency are acceptable. (Moser and Calton, 1971)

Analysis of data

A descriptive analysis of the data was undertaken (see Appendix 7 for a full numeric summary of data). This was felt to be justified because-

- The target group was very small and more detailed statistical analyses would be invalid due to underlying assumptions of sample characteristics.
- This research study, whilst employing a mixture of methodologies, is primarily designed as a case study approach.

Closed questions

In exploring perceptions about the purposes of education, the majority of the respondents agreed that education was intended to increase knowledge (¹³/₁₅), increase employment opportunities (¹²/₁₅) and socialise young people (¹⁰/₁₅). Interestingly, in terms of socialisation two of the three workers from the Disabled Children's Team did not think that education had a role to fulfil. This finding could usefully be explored further by undertaking a semi-structured interview about their perceptions on the purposes of education for their client group.

Only just above half of the workers agreed with the statement that “Social workers can play a major role in the education of looked after young people”. This belief was fairly uniform across the teams. The majority ($^{13}/_{15}$) thought that social workers must prioritise education when seeking foster/residential placements. This could be linked with the majority belief (11 workers) that young people being in school/educational placement was essential to care placement being maintained. In terms of the benefits from continuity in educational placement, more than three-quarters of the respondents believed that changing schools could have a detrimental effect on educational achievement. Just over a quarter were aware of the target time for securing an educational placement for a looked after young person. Unsurprisingly, therefore, only a fifth of workers agreed that they would not move a young person unless an educational placement had been secured. This aligned with the majority ($^{12}/_{15}$) belief that LEA officers should be responsible for identifying and securing educational placements.

From their past experience, only three workers disagreed with the statement that it was difficult to liaise with some schools to seek information/request a meeting (half agreed). Conversely, the majority (twelve workers) thought that schools expect social workers to attend their meetings when there are difficulties. There was unanimous agreement that facilitating access to education is an activity which requires collaboration of all those involved with looked after young people and that ‘joined up’ working practices could result in improvement in young people’s educational experiences. All but one of the workers thought that there should be greater levels of collaboration. In terms of the time involved to achieve this, three-quarters felt that it was justified by positive educational outcomes for looked after pupils in some schools. However, a third of the respondents could also identify that for some schools the time involved in collaborative working was not justified by the outcome. Respondents were not asked to elaborate on their response but this could be usefully explored in future research.

In exploring the role of designated teacher for young people in public care:

- (i) Just less than half of the respondents agreed that all the schools they dealt with had designated teachers. None of the Disabled Children's Team agreed with this statement.
- (ii) Just less than half felt that the post had improved their experience of liaison with some schools. Conversely only a third felt that the post had not made a difference with some schools.
- (iii) Only one respondent felt that most designated teachers were committed to 'champion' the looked after children in their school.
- (iv) Just over a quarter thought that designated teachers were aware of the general difficulties experienced by young people who are looked after. A further question indicated that the figure was the same for the general population of teachers that they work with. This aligned with the unanimous belief of the respondents that designated teachers would require training to enable them to undertake their role in an effective way.

The majority of the social workers (13 of the 15) questioned believed that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were important in terms of attempting to improve the educational experience of young people. However, they were not so clear on requirements in terms of Department of Health targets, timescales and responsibilities, in that –

- a) Just over half were aware that the Department of Health had targets on completion of PEPs;
- b) Six were aware of Shiretown's target times for sending information to a school to request a PEP meeting;
- c) Three were aware of target times for completing a PEP when school/educational provision was changed. Same number when a young person was brought into the care of the local authority; and
- d) Six thought that completion of PEPs was the responsibility of the school.
- e) Seven disagreed that the PEP could be effectively completed without a meeting of all those involved with the young person (one respondent thought it could).

Open questions

Although respondents were asked to make additional comments about the education of looked after young people, none of them added any information.

Discussion of findings in relation to questions, literature, methodology

The majority of the designated teachers recognised the value of ‘joined up’ working practices between those involved in corporate parenting to improve the educational experience(s) of children and young people in public care. This was reinforced by examples of collaboration/co-operation that had resulted in positive outcomes, for example, the residential holiday. Whilst there had been some negative examples, there was a majority commitment to collaborative working and establishing frameworks to implement this effectively. From the survey of social workers, there was a commitment to collaborate/co-operate with schools even though there was some degree of criticism that, with some schools, the amount of time necessary for this was not justified by the outcomes. However, there was the recognition that the educational experience of looked after young people could be improved by multi-agency collaboration.

From the designated teachers, there was a recognition that different working practices hindered/impeded establishing effective collaborative working. The literature (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999; Coulling, 2000) identified the need for shared understanding and knowledge of other agencies’ differing professional disciplines. The designated teachers identified joint training as a means of overcoming this barrier to effective collaborative/co-operative working. The social workers concurred with the view that the designated teachers needed training to undertake their role in an effective way.

These findings directly relate to the research question:

Can multi-agency co-operation be established to improve the educational experience of Shiretown’s population of young people in public care?

The literature on multi-agency working also relates to the interviews, particularly on the following issues-

- a) Consideration of factors that inhibit or militate against 'joined up' working (DfEE/DoH, 2000)
- b) Need for knowledge of different agencies' systems (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999)
- c) Need for committed individuals (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999)
- d) Wish to be involved in multi-agency collaboration, rather than being directed to engage (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)
- e) Communication difficulties (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999; Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

One of the points that Henderson (2002) identified was that to establish an inclusive school it was essential to engage with other professionals in the community. Given that the ethos and culture of an inclusive school could develop an atmosphere of "belonging" which could facilitate the young person's sense of self-worth and confidence, the inclusion agenda would appear to be one that is relevant to improving the educational experience of looked after children. Henderson (2002) also believed that consideration had to be given to the curriculum. This would appear to be reinforced by the view of Cullen (2000a) that multi-agency collaboration was essential for developing the alternative curricula for Key Stage 4 to prevent disaffection for some pupils. Two of the designated teachers had perceptions about the difficulty for some looked after young people having to 'fit into' the very prescriptive systems for GCSE and 'A' level courses and the appropriateness of alternative curricula. It may be that schools with an inclusive ethos will provide the contexts that facilitate positive and meaningful multi-agency working (research question 2). Certainly, the literature on inclusivity and alternative curricula would seem to align with management of some of the behavioural difficulties manifested by looked after children, as a result of attachment disorders.

The Government's requirement was that designated teachers would 'champion' looked after pupils. Atkinson and Kinder (2002) also suggested that committed individuals or 'champions' were necessary for successful multi-agency working. Only one social worker of the 15 interviewed felt that designated teachers were committed to champion the looked after children in their schools. It would appear that designated teachers were not achieving/realising high profiles with some workers/teams. Interestingly, the Disabled Children's Team's experience, of not being aware that all schools had this post, aligned with the author's difficulties in engaging schools in Personal Education Plan completion. Special schools had been the most difficult to engage because they believed that the Individual Education Plans, they had for all their pupils, sufficed.

From the analysis of the data derived from the interview schedule for designated teachers, it appeared to result in some valuable and interesting information in respect of the perceptions of designated teachers, both in identifying the need for co-operation between all the agencies involved in corporate parenting, the difficulties in achieving this and possible frameworks to implement 'joined up' working practices.

The Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfES, 2000) had clearly identified that not enough priority has been given to the education of looked after children and that there needed to be 'joined up' working by those involved in corporate parenting. The exploratory research with social workers would appear to indicate that while social workers were prepared to prioritise education, they were not aware of the major role that they could play in the education of the young people they worked with. Clearly training had been identified as essential for designated teachers. There would also appear to be an established training need for social workers in that they were not clear about procedures and timescales for information exchange, personal education plan initiation and completion and school placement. The questionnaire did not afford them the opportunity to identify training as a need for their own profession.

Evaluation of implications of initial study for research plans

The initial part of the research highlighted some operational questions that needed to be addressed in the main part of this research study:

- Given the demands on the teaching profession, how could training be delivered to enable designated teachers to understand the difficulties of looked after children and for this to knowledge to lead to actions that could be sustained? (Research q.4)
- Would the knowledge derived from training encourage the designated teachers to ‘champion’ the looked after children in their schools? (Research q.2 and q.4)
- How will the characteristics of an effective designated teacher be identified? (Research q.5)
- What are the conditions in which multi-agency working flourishes? (Research q.1, q.2 and q.3)
- What outcomes will be used to ascertain whether multi-agency working has resulted in improvement in the education of looked after pupils? (Research q.3)

The following chapter, reports on the intermediate phase of the research study, where case studies from the sample schools are examined. These operational issues need to be addressed in this section.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH STUDY : INTERMEDIATE PHASE

Case studies

This chapter reports a sample of case studies from the schools in the study that indicate either effective collaboration or lack of it. They are reported chronologically to give an indication of whether there was an improvement over time. However, many of the incidents had long-term effects and these are also reported.

Special L School : Trudy (February 2002→)

Trudy had a statement of special educational needs for learning difficulties and had attended Special L. During Year 7, the foster carer had requested that consideration be given as to whether Trudy could be considered for transfer to a mainstream school. After consultation with all agencies it was decided that –

- In terms of learning, Trudy could be accommodated in mainstream.
- She had poor interpersonal skills and this often resulted in her being in conflict with her peers.
- She displayed some immaturity.

The decision was made that there would be some work undertaken to gauge whether Trudy could make a successful transition to a mainstream school for the commencement of the following academic year. To facilitate this the following actions were identified as being necessary –

- a) Trudy to attend a mainstream primary school (Year 6) for one day per week in the first instance. This would be increased if it was successful. This was facilitated by the school's outreach teacher. Towards the end of the summer term Trudy was spending four days a week in the mainstream primary and one in Special L.

- b) To improve her interpersonal skills with peers, Trudy should be included in a youth community group. The foster carer identified a local Girl Guide pack that Trudy attended. As well as the weekly sessions, Trudy had the opportunity to attend residential camps.

Trudy made a successful transition to Mainstream A at the beginning of the following academic year. It was decided that because of her immaturity and poor, although improved, interpersonal skills, she should repeat Year 7. This allowed her to be in the same class as some of the pupils from the primary school that she had attended. This successful transition was as a direct result of excellent collaboration between social worker, designated teacher and carer and the involvement of multiple resources, i.e. the outreach teacher, Girl Guide pack and the mainstream primary and secondary schools.

Special B School : Mark (March 2002)

Mark was a Year 10 pupil with moderate learning and behavioural difficulties. At the time of his admission into care he had a place at Special L but had not attended for several months. He was placed in the authority's children's home and a meeting was arranged with Special L to organise a re-integration programme. Although Mark was involved in this meeting and appeared to be in agreement with the arrangements, he was not given a choice of alternative placements. In the event, Mark was permanently excluded from Special L on the first day of his re-integration programme. Although he had not appeared to be in opposition to a re-integration programme, this was almost certainly a deliberate act on his part to avoid school attendance. It was subsequently decided that he would be more appropriately placed in a school for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and a place was secured for him at Special B. This school appeared to be able to meet Mark's educational needs, whilst being able to engage him in education. Certainly, when he visited the school prior to his admission, he was enthusiastic to attend.

At the end of the first week in Special B, Mark and some other pupils were out of a lesson and annoying a member of staff, by refusing to comply to her requests

and taunting her. The member of staff hit out at the group and made contact with Mark, causing bruising. Mark refused to attend school the following day and cited the incident as the reason for this. The manager of the children's home made a formal complaint to the Headteacher. The Head indicated that the pupils should not have been out of the lesson and indicated that no action would be taken against the member of staff. As a result of this response, the complaint was then progressed through the LEA and subsequently the Head Teacher was instructed to take disciplinary action against the member of staff.

Without judging the management of the situation, this incident indicates a lack of 'joined up' working. Whilst such practice would not have prevented the injury to Mark, the actions following it should have been collaborative. As such, whilst the outcome for the member of staff may have been the same, Mark may have felt more valued and consequently not refused to attend school. Presumably the Head Teacher may have felt disempowered by being instructed by the LEA officer to take certain actions and this could have been avoided. At the very least, this designated teacher did not advocate for or undertake a corporate parenting role for this looked after pupil. It may be that the role of designated teacher is very different in a special school as against a mainstream school. This may be evidenced from any incidents recorded about pupils from Special L. This comparison would only show the situation in Shiretown, which may not be representative of other local authorities. This could be an area for further research to be undertaken to ascertain any differences between the role in different types of school.

Mainstream C School/Education Other : George (Summer 2002→)

George was an unaccompanied asylum seeker from Kosova. He was accommodated in the local authority's residential children's home and referred to Education Other for immediate educational provision. Given the Government targets about securing educational provision for looked after pupils (DfEE/DoH, 2000), this provision was the fastest to secure and thus met the 20-day target. George attended the pupil referral unit for a few weeks until his application had been considered for a Year 9 placement in Mainstream C. Subsequently, George

was admitted to this school. Mainstream C had good links with the LEA's Equality and Interpretation Services and had several pupils with English as a second language. The school was able to provide a mother tongue peer mentor for George. Although Mainstream C appeared to have the resources to meet George's needs, he attended for two days and then refused to attend further, stating that he found the groups too large, the behaviour too disruptive and the work too difficult. Social Services (social worker and teacher/advisor), the school (SENCo), the residential keyworker and George met to resolve this. As a result, a programme of re-integration was planned to facilitate George resuming attendance, commencing with part-time and gradually moving to full-time. Although this was achieved, George's attendance continued to be problematic with him achieving only around 80% for Year 9.

At the end of Year 9, the children's home closed and George was placed in a local foster placement. Although he was resistant to this move, he appeared to settle into the placement. The location of this placement facilitated George continuing his education at Mainstream C. By the end of the first half-term in Year 10, George's attendance at school had dropped to below 30%. Again a multi-agency meeting was arranged. At this meeting George stated that he would not return to Mainstream C. He found the teaching groups too large, the pupils too disruptive or the lessons too hard. The school had recognised that, if George was placed in the lower ability teaching groups, whilst he could access the teaching and learning, the behaviour of the other pupils in those groups tended to be disruptive. Therefore, George (in line with Shiretown's policy on asylum-seeking pupils) had been placed in higher ability groups. This had resulted in him finding the work too difficult. This was a difficult situation, in that neither of the options totally met George's needs in terms of levels of work and behaviour. He requested a move back to the pupil referral unit, where the group sizes were small.

The designated teacher at Education Other recognised that, for some young people, group size could be problematic and that can be difficult to anticipate –

“ ... if a social worker does some one-to-one work with a child then that’s fine ... that doesn’t mean that they are going to be fine in a class with thirty.” (ZL, 2002)

The decision was made that the school should fund a place for George at the authority’s pupil referral unit, although links for him with the school should be maintained, i.e. he could access non-academic subjects, e.g. physical education. This was to facilitate a possible move back into mainstream, if he wanted this.

Not only did George fail to access the opportunity to partake in non-academic subjects at the host mainstream school but he rapidly failed to access the provision from Education Other. After a one term period, when his attendance was below 40% and he had displayed some inappropriate behaviour that resulted in a five-day fixed term exclusion, a Pastoral Support Plan meeting was scheduled. At this meeting it was decided that as George was not accessing the provision, it should be amended to provide four hours individual home tuition per week. This decision was based on –

- (i) To access 25 hours full time equivalent (fte), George had been placed in a group who predominantly comprised excluded pupils. There were significant behavioural difficulties with this group and George had been adversely influenced by this.
- (ii) George’s attendance record was poor. The number of young people in public care who had more than 25 days absence in an academic year had to be reported to the Department of Health. George’s attendance had put him in this reporting category. If he accessed the four hours of home tuition per week that he was allocated, his “attendance” could be reported as 100%.

It would appear that to ‘manage’ his behaviour and make him a statistically ‘successful’ student, it was necessary to reduce his educational provision to a level where this could be achieved. Unfortunately, this was a management/statistical exercise rather than an improvement in his educational experience. This would appear to support the ‘solution’ mentioned by Fletcher-Campbell and Archer

(2003), which benefited adults, rather than young people. For the adults, it was possible to 'tick the boxes' for George being in educational provision and having an acceptable level of attendance, i.e. no more than 25 days' absence in an academic year.

Mainstream C School/Education Other : Zena (November 2002→)

Zena was a black African student who had arrived in Britain at the age of 10, to join her father, with whom she had never lived, nor had any contact. Social Services became involved when the school reported that there was the suspicion that she was being physically abused and neglected in the home. As a result of this, she had a short period in care and returned to the family home. However, she was taken into public care of the local authority during Year 9 and the plan was that she would remain in long-term foster care/supported lodgings until the age of 18.

During Year 10, the school raised concerns about her behaving inappropriately, as follows:

- She was extremely rude to some members of teaching staff;
- She was displaying bullying behaviour, particularly targeting one vulnerable pupil.

The designated teacher had some general insight into the difficulties experienced by children/young people in public care and more specifically of why Zena was not accessing education and behaving inappropriately --

“[She was] disengaged through unhappiness and was transferring this discomfort on to other children.” (CH, 2002)

Social Services (social worker and teacher/advisor), the foster carer and the school (SENCo and designated teacher) met several times, over a course of four months, to discuss this and implement and review a Pastoral Support Programme.

Although several strategies were implemented, the school subsequently decided to give Zena a 15-day fixed term exclusion because of a serious incident of bullying,

involving a weapon, against the pupil that she had targeted. The Education Out of School Service had agreed that, for any looked after child who was excluded from school, an education package of 25 hours full-time equivalent would be offered, until reinstatement could be effected in the school where the pupil was on roll. Therefore, Zena was offered a place in one of the LEA's pupil referral units. Within the first week of being placed there, the parents of two pupils in Mainstream C contacted the school and police to complain about further bullying incidents of their children by Zena. As a result of this, the Headteacher of Mainstream C made the decision that Zena should not return to school. Social Services, the carer and Education Other liaised with Mainstream C and the decision was made that a Zena should continue to be educated at the PRU and that this placement would be funded by the school. Zena was in agreement with this arrangement and it was, therefore, not necessary to resort to disciplinary action for implementation.

Zena settled well into the pupil referral unit. The small teaching groups appeared to suit her. The SENCo at Mainstream C School had thought that Zena may have some learning difficulties but, because English was her second language, had not attempted to have an assessment carried out. In Mainstream C, Zena had been placed in the low ability groups but had accessed very little learning. This may have been because she was not able to have the extra support that was available to her as part of a small group with a broad range of abilities in Education Other. The designated teacher of Education Other believed that –

“... education needs to reach out to those children to engage them ... and to keep on doing it. ... But I would like to be judged here by how happy our children are because th-the thing is that children want to come here.” (ZL, 2002)

At Education Other, Zena was engaged in education and has said that she was happy there. The designated teacher at the pupil referral unit reported that Zena worked well and did not displayed any of the inappropriate behaviours that she did previously. Zena left Education Other in summer 2004 with three GCSEs and several other accreditations. It may be that the small teaching groups and

differentiated work that was available to Zena at Education Other met her educational needs in a way that the work presented at Mainstream C did not. It may be that Zena did have undiagnosed special educational needs, in addition to her difficulties arising from English being her second language.

Mainstream C School : Personal Education Plans – Not! (Summer 2003)

The designated teacher for Looked After Children at this school was also the deputy head (pastoral) and the Child Protection Officer. From the interview conducted with her, it was clear that she was committed to doing a good job in her role as designated teacher, evidenced by her comment –

“You know if I want to do it absolutely thoroughly, what I want to do is be meeting with those children every week, want to be looking at their books, totally involved in, you know, their life ... the role came to me because it fitted in well with what I do and it is a role that I would really love to do but because I am also being asked to do, you know, all the other things I really haven’t got time I need to fulfil that role ... because it is a huge role in itself ...”

However, initially it had been hard to engage her in the process of arranging meetings for the completion of Personal Education Plans for the looked after pupils in the school. Her reluctance was because she was keen to make the whole process meaningful.

“ If it is not set up properly, it won’t work and the children will really miss out ... and that upsets me, you know, I don’t feel good about that.”

At the interview meeting it had been agreed that the school would provide a venue for the PEP meetings on a mutually agreed date (all meetings to be held during a block session at six monthly intervals) and that Social Service workers would undertake the organisation of meetings, in terms of sending invitations to all interested parties and drawing up the plans and circulating the paperwork. This

was the format of the first of the block sessions during which Personal Education Plan meetings were held for three looked after young people. The meetings were extremely well resourced, in that the designated teacher had requested reports from each of the subject teachers for the young people and these informed the meeting. This gave a sound basis for short- and long-term target setting. Each meeting was of one hour's duration and a review date was organised.

During the six month period between the initial PEP meetings and the first review meeting, another looked after young person was admitted to the school. The initial PEP meeting for this young person was held within the 20-day period and the review was booked to coincide with the block session for the other young people in public care on the school roll. Therefore, there would be four Personal Education Plan meetings on this date.

About a month before the first review date, I had contacted the designated teacher, by e-mail, to request consideration of placement in the school of another looked after young person. I received no reply to this request. About a week before the agreed review date, I again e-mailed the designated teacher suggesting a 'running order' for the four PEP meetings. I also e-mailed social workers and reminded them to invite carers and other interested parties to the meetings. I received no response from the designated teacher.

On the day of the review meetings I arrived at the school, together with the social worker for one of the young people, at the time of the first meeting. Three-quarters of an hour after our arrival, the Headteacher informed me that the PEP meeting would not be happening because the designated teacher was undertaking an observation and could not leave this task. He told me that he thought that he had allocated too much work to the designated teacher and felt that she needed to delegate some of this. He thought that it was not the actual meetings that were causing difficulties but the preparation for them. It appeared that it was the designated teacher's desire to make the meetings meaningful and effective that had caused them not to happen at all.

A month later, I received a telephone message from the designated teacher, asking me to call to re-arrange the meetings. It took another few weeks for me to be able to contact her. At this stage, not only were the meetings substantially overdue but it was getting to be very near to the end of the summer term. The meetings were organised hastily and as a result carers and social workers were poorly represented. Whilst the information from the school was again very full and informative, there was not the collaboration in terms of multi-agency working that would have been achieved if the meetings had taken place on the original date, when there had been enough notice for social workers and carers to attend.

Special B School : Colin (March 2003→)

The designated teacher for Looked After Children at this school was also the Head Teacher and the Child Protection Officer.

Colin was a Year 11 pupil. He was involved in criminal activities, was known to the Youth Offending Team but had only received a final warning. Shiretown Social Services had a Full Care Order on Colin but he had lived at home with his mother for the previous two years, since having a lengthy exclusion from a weekday boarding school. The Care Order was due to be revoked and, when this had been done, support would have been offered to the family from the Adolescent Resources Team and/or the Leaving Care Team.

Colin's mother was very co-operative with the school, responding immediately to requests for her to attend meetings. Colin was well settled in Special B. He had received 15 days fixed-term exclusions during the 18 months he was in school. This level of fixed-term exclusions was not unusual for pupils at this school.

Colin and his mother lived in corporation rented accommodation. Also living in the house was his older sibling, the sibling's partner and their young child. Colin's eldest sibling lived with his partner and their child in a nearby house. Colin's mother was a registered drug addict, as was his eldest sibling. Colin's mother and both of his siblings had received custodial sentences for criminal activities, involving theft and threatening and/or violent behaviour.

Colin's behaviour was causing anxieties in the neighbourhood and the residents had been compiling a list of complaints against him, involving theft, threatening behaviour and other anti-social activities. As a result of this, the police and local authority Housing Department decided to consider issuing an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) against him and evict the family from their accommodation. A multi-disciplinary meeting took place and the Headteacher attended. Most of the professionals at the meeting supported the notion of issuing the ASBO, as it was felt that the family would not change their behaviour. Social Services did not support this proposal as Colin and his mother had a good attachment and he would not have wanted to jeopardise their accommodation, given that it would almost certainly entail his being placed back in the care system. Social Services were of the opinion that if Colin and his mother knew that this was a likely outcome of him not changing his behaviour, he would attempt to change and she would have monitored this. Workers from Social Services' Multi-Agency Support Team would have organised a programme of activities and some work around behaviour modification. This would, of course, have been done in conjunction with the school to ensure that there was a consistent approach to him. Given that the school had acknowledged that Colin's behaviour had improved since his admission and that his mother was supportive of them, there was the expectation that the Head Teacher would support this delay of imposing the ASBO for a further attempt to bring about some improvement. In the event, the Head Teacher did not have anything positive to add to the discussion about Colin or his mother and voted for the ASBO to be progressed.

Social Services did attempt to engage Colin in mainstream activities to prevent any further escalation of his anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood but, without the lever of keeping the tenancy, neither Colin nor his mother saw any benefit in this.

Whilst there were no guarantees that a combined intervention by the school and Social Services could bring about some change to Colin's behaviour during his out-of-school hours, a 'joined up' approach should have been attempted to prevent Colin becoming another negative statistic for looked after children. This

designated teacher had been reluctant to work collaboratively with those involved in corporate parenting because he felt that he worked with Social Services, by virtue of the fact that a high percentage of the school's pupils had social workers -

“It is probably why ... when I knew it [designated teachers/PEPs] was being set up ... I was a bit ambivalent in my getting involved in it because ... at that time to me it was, “I am doing this anyway””. (EL, 2002)

Another factor that may have influenced the Head Teacher's reluctance to work collaboratively with Social Services, was that, in addition to the incident involving Mark (above), there had been another occasion in the previous year when the Department had made a complaint to the Education Department about a similar child protection incident that had occurred at the school, without correct procedures being adhered to. This complaint had also been upheld and the Head had been required to take appropriate actions.

Mainstream H School : Wendy and Ian (March 2003→)

Wendy and Ian are Afro-Caribbean siblings who were fostered by a white couple, Rachel and John who were in their 50's. Wendy was due to transfer to Year 7 of Mainstream H School in September 2002. Her brother, Ian, was a Year 9 pupil at the school, so the designated teacher was aware of the care status and histories of these young people. The long-term male foster carer died a few days before the start of the Autumn term. Whilst he had been in poor health for some time, his death was unexpected.

Care decisions were soon made, in that Rachel opted to continue to care, in a long-term capacity, for both young people. Therefore, their school placements were stable. Both young people appeared to adjust to life without the male carer. In fact, the family unit was unable to undertake some activities that they had previously been prevented from doing because of the ill-health of John.

During the Spring term, Rachel announced her engagement and intention to re-marry in the summer. The new partner of their carer was known to the children

both from a local drama group and because he worked in the offices of their school. The new partner, James, had three teenage children a few years older than Ian and Wendy. This family group was White British.

Wendy

The designated teacher at Mainstream H contacted me, within a short time of the marriage announcement, to inform me that there had been a noticeable change in Wendy's behaviour, in that she was exhibiting bullying tactics and being defiant and rude to some teachers. Whilst this was not at a level that would usually warrant any other agency involvement, she felt that joint and early intervention could avoid an escalation. It was agreed that we would hold an early Personal Education Plan (PEP) review to bring together those involved in corporate parenting. Within seven school days the meeting was held. On this occasion there was recognition that Wendy had had a difficult period in her life. She was not enthusiastic about her carer's proposed marriage and openly dismissive of James. To reduce the opportunities in school for Wendy to have contact with James, it was decided that he would move to an office that was not open to view of students or visitors. Short-term targets were set to address the negative behaviours that Wendy was exhibiting. School would keep the carer regularly informed of Wendy's behaviour so that Rachel could reward improved behaviour and support school in dealing with inappropriate behaviour, e.g. ensuring attendance at detentions, etc.

It was agreed that the school, Social Services and carer should liaise closely and meet regularly to review the situation re. Wendy's behaviour. The designated teacher felt that it would be more valuable if she delegated these tasks to the Head of Year 7 and Wendy's form tutor, as they would be dealing with the day-to-day situations and, therefore, have first hand knowledge. Meetings were organised to be held each half term, with the option to call an early meeting if there were any concerns.

During the next two of these meetings, by combining our knowledge of Wendy, it was possible to put in place measures that were more effective in having a positive

outcome. For example, Rachel knew that Wendy did not like her form tutor but liked her Head of Year. She had been particularly disruptive in lessons with her form tutor, which resulted in her being sent to the Head of Year. In fact, this was a reward for Wendy rather than the intended punishment. With this knowledge, more appropriate strategies were implemented. By working jointly, there were several initiatives that were put in place to attempt to bring about an improvement in Wendy's behaviour so that she could access the curriculum more effectively –

- The social worker organised bereavement counselling for Rachel and the two children.
- A learning support worker from the Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) worked in school to observe Wendy and undertake some in class support with her.
- Shiretown's Teacher/Advisor has considerable experience in behavioural and emotional support and undertook some behavioural modification work with Wendy.
- The MAST sessional worker – a black Afro-Caribbean woman - undertook some sessions with Wendy around cultural and ethnic issues.
- The designated teacher had daily sessions with Wendy to discuss behavioural issues and give Wendy opportunity to discuss concerns.
- Wendy and her brother were both included in an activities holiday that MAST organised. The purpose of this was two-fold in that both children would be away during the week before the wedding and, therefore, not involved in the last minute arrangements. Also the emphasis for the week, as well as having fun, would be on social skills. Three of the six young people on the holiday had been identified as having difficulties in establishing and sustaining appropriate peer relationships because of bullying issues.

Although Wendy still displayed some inappropriate behaviours in school, they lessened in frequency and intensity and Wendy began to take some responsibility for her behaviour, rather than blame others for inciting her.

The designated teacher had been given a lot of information about the difficulties experienced by Wendy's birth parents, their poor parenting skills which resulted in the children being taken into public care and a significant placement breakdown. This has been imparted to her by both Rachel and more latterly John. In fact, on a 'need to know basis' she had been given too much information. However, this information appears to have give her a greater understanding of the difficulties experienced by looked after children and the associated behavioural difficulties. In the start of study interviews, one of the designated teachers (SG) had recognised the importance of having detailed information -

“... we don't always know that that incident has taken place or we don't know the reason behind the change in behaviour.”

(SG, 2002)

This designated teacher appeared to exhibit a desire to work co-operatively and collaboratively with those involved in corporate parenting and to welcome some cross-boundary work. Examples of this were by allowing behaviour modification work to be undertaken during school hours and by allowing Multi-Agency Support Team's Learning Mentor to reinforce this with in-class support sessions.

In terms of collaborative working, Wendy was able to list all of those who had been involved in attempting to resolve the difficulties she had been experiencing at school. She felt that the involvement of so many people had been supportive and helpful. She identified the person in the role of designated teacher as being the person who had made the greatest difference. Wendy felt that this was because she had power because of her status as deputy head but also because she appeared to understand the difficulties that she was experiencing and genuinely wanted to help her improve her behaviour, so that she could continue and finish her education in the school. Wendy was not aware that there was the position of

designated teacher of pupils in public care nor that this person had that post and responsibility.

Rachel felt that she had established a good relationship of working together with Mainstream A., from when she and her late husband had fostered another young person who been a pupil there. She felt that a mutual respect existed between her and the school. With Wendy, Rachel felt that it was a team effort to effect an improvement in her behaviour, with the carers refocusing her and supporting the school's targets. James working at the school was seen by Rachel as both helpful and difficult in that he had a role both as a carer and an employee. Therefore, the senior management sometimes withheld information from him about incidents involving Wendy. However, this was sometimes relayed to him by other staff members.

Rachel felt that, in terms of whether Wendy responded better to a lot of intervention or low level intervention, it would be a dichotomy in that she would not want to appear 'different' from others and Social Services involvement would indicate this. However, Wendy was very attention-seeking and, therefore, may have enjoyed the involvement of many people.

Details of a semi-structured interview with Wendy are recorded later in this chapter.

Ian

Ian had had some behavioural difficulties in primary school, which resulted in a ten-day fixed term exclusion, followed by a period of part-time schooling. In secondary school, whilst exhibiting some behavioural difficulties, he had not been a high profile student. During Years 7 and 8, whilst there had been some incidents of inappropriate behaviour, there had not been any incidents that had warranted multi-agency intervention. In the Summer Term of Year 9, there had been a verbally and physically aggressive incident, which had resulted in Ian being given a three-day fixed term exclusion. This had resulted in him being excluded from the school for a significant number of the SATs. The consultation with teachers that resulted from this incident indicated that his behaviour had been increasingly

confrontational during this period. Two weeks after his re-admittance, Ian was verbally abusive and unco-operative with a teacher and this resulted in a further one-day exclusion.

The carers suggested to me that Ian should have a managed move to a new school to give him a 'fresh start' for Key Stage 4. They were particularly concerned that, in Mainstream A, the teaching group that he would be in (a low ability set) would include some pupils with disruptive behaviour and this would influence him.

Whilst I consulted with the social worker on this proposal, my advice was that Ian was taking no responsibility for his behaviour and, therefore, did not demonstrate a desire to change that would have been necessary for a 'fresh start'. If he continued to behave inappropriately in a new school, he would be more likely to be permanently excluded because the receiving school would have had no 'history' or 'ownership' of him. I also felt that James's knowledge of the pupils, derived from working at the school, had informed this decision. It would be likely that any low ability class at Key Stage 4 would contain pupils with disruptive behaviour. These would have been an unknown quantity in a new school.

The designated teacher of Mainstream A. informed me that whilst Ian's behaviour had recently been unacceptable, she wished him to continue and finish his education at the school. She wanted to work collaboratively with carers and professionals to facilitate an improvement in his attitude and behaviour. This information was re-assuring to the carers who felt that the school did not wish to retain Ian. Ian also responded well to this and made the commitment to complete his education at Mainstream A. This resulted in a considerable improvement in his behaviour.

For Ian, the episodes of serious breaches of school rules coincided with the enlarged family moving to a new property. In addition, Ian was made aware that he would be part of an alternative curriculum group at Key Stage 4, which whilst targeting core skills had a much more practical content than the usual GCSE courses. He viewed this as a 'failure' and this impacted on his self-esteem. To attempt to improve this and maximise his achievement, the MAST Tutor/Mentor undertook some individual tutoring sessions with him. These sessions occurred at

the end of the school day, on the school premises. This was arranged because Ian disliked 'intrusions' in his life and he felt able to engage with the tutor because she had no links with carers and her only liaison with school was when Ian wished it. For Ian, collaboration had to be low-key in that he did not want to be 'different' from his peers and, therefore, did not want Social Services to have a high profile in meetings, etc. Therefore, much of the collaborative work occurred without Ian being present and him being consulted outside of the meetings.

Details of a semi-structured interview with Ian are recorded later in this chapter.

Education Other : Dan (May 2003→)

Dan was taken into public care at age 11 because it was felt that he posed a risk to his younger siblings. Towards the end of Year 7, the secondary school that he had transferred to (prior to being admitted into care) was finding his behaviour challenging and subsequently permanently excluded him. A residential placement, with education, was then secured for Dan at a provision that specialised in working with boys around the offending behaviour that he displayed. However, this provision broke down within a term.

A place in a 3-bedded children's home was secured for Dan and he received home tuition via the local education authority's Education Other. This was felt to be progressing well and Dan was identified as an above average ability pupil. During this time there was regular liaison between Social Services and the Head of Education Other. As a result of improvements in his behaviour and his engagement in education, it was decided that Dan's education package should be aimed at his re-integration into a mainstream school during Year 9, to enable him to access the GCSE courses in Key Stage 4. This would involve Dan being included in teaching groups at the authority's pupil referral unit provision. Although Dan was positive about this plan, he subsequently assaulted the home tutor. Tuition was then rescheduled and Dan had to be accompanied by a care worker for all lessons. Attempts to include him in teaching groups resulted in disruption to lessons, complaints from other pupils and the threatened withdrawal by two parents of their children if he remained in the group. The decision was

then made that Dan should remain being educated by Education Other, with opportunities for a FE college link course in Year 10.

The difficulties that Dan presented in any educational setting necessitated close liaison between Social Services (Teacher/Advisor for LAC and social worker) and Education Other (designated teacher), residential social workers and Dan's father, who was influential for Dan. At the start of Year 10, Dan was admitted to the local FE college for one day per week to studying engineering. Although academically he was succeeding, again his behaviour caused concern. The college felt that Dan was interfering with the learning of other students and undertaking bullying tactics to an extent where other students in the class had stated that they would not attend if he remained. Although Social Services offered the services of a learning support worker for all of the time he was in college, it was decided to withdraw the offer of a place on the course for him.

Therefore, for the majority of Years 9, 10 and all of Year 11, Education Other was the only provider of education for Dan. He continued to receive most of his lessons on an individual basis because of the disruption he caused to groups. However, Education Other continuously attempted to involve him with others, whilst assessing the risk of that.

During the summer term of Year 10, Dan's place at the children's home was terminated because of the risk that he posed to the staff and other young people living in the home. He returned to live in the family home. His attendance at the pupil referral unit (PRU), where he received his education, became spasmodic. At one stage, Dan failed to attend the pupil referral unit for any lesson for a period of two weeks. After this, he telephoned the designated teacher and requested that his tutor travel to his home for the individual lesson scheduled for that day. The designated teacher decided that, rather than Dan miss another lesson, this request should be adhered to. The tutor went to his home on that occasion and the next day Dan attended the pupil referral unit. The designated teacher explained that, whilst he did not usually allow pupils to dictate the terms of their teaching, he was willing to accede to Dan's request in an attempt to re-engage him in education.

The designated teacher admits that he has not been able to offer Dan the education that he would have wished to, in view of his ability. He had to consider the impact of Dan's behaviour on the learning of others. However, he has never ceased to attempt to improve his provision by inclusion in groups or with one other pupil. It is the flexibility of the Education Other service that has been able to engage Dan, albeit often on his terms, and the ability of the designated teacher to separate the behaviour from the child.

Details of a semi-structured interview with Dan are recorded later in this chapter.

Special L School : Kristian (Summer 2003)

Kristian was a Year 9 pupil who had moderate learning difficulties. He had attended a mainstream primary school but the decision had been taken that he required a special school placement for his secondary education. The placement in Special Learning had been extremely successful for Kristian. He was popular in school with teachers and pupils, enjoyed success afforded by the differentiated curriculum and the long-term foster carer, who had the ultimate decision on his secondary placement, believed that it was an appropriate placement for him.

In the foster home setting, Kristian had been discovered initiating inappropriate sexual acts with considerably younger children. The second of these incidents had been reported to the police who had recorded the complaint but decided to take no further action on that occasion. To attempt to avoid any repetition of this, the following steps were taken:

- (i) Opportunities for further inappropriate contact minimised;
- (ii) Information shared on a 'need to know' basis;
- (iii) Appropriate therapy arranged for Kristian to address his offending behaviour.

Under items (i) and (ii) above, the designated teacher was informed of the incidents. This information enabled the school to be vigilant concerning contact Kristian may have had with younger pupils. In particular, there was concern

around his attendance at the after school club, given the less structured format of it and the inclusion of a wide age range of pupils. It was decided that Kristian should cease to attend the sessions until a fuller assessment could be made of his risk to others.

However, the school were concerned that whilst keeping Kristian and all other pupils safe, he should not be excluded from all extra-curricular activities. Instead it was felt that measures should be put in place that would enable him to be safe and a part of the group. In particular, he very much wished to go on an army camp residential holiday organised by the school. The pupils would be sleeping in tents and it was felt that this would be difficult to monitor. The solution was for the school to work with the carer and Social Services. Kristian did attend the camp but, at night, instead of sleeping in the tents he went to a nearby caravan with his carer. This was funded by Social Services. Kristian was able to join the other pupils for all of the organised activities and only be excluded when it was not possible to safely monitor all movements. The other pupils were accepting of the stated reason for this of him needing to accompany the carer.

In this scenario, it would have been easy for the school to have suggested that Kristian should not be included on the residential but, with accurate and full information, a risk assessment was able to be made that ensured the safety of all pupils. The decision to include Kristian was jointly made by the school, the carer and the social worker. This meant that responsibility was shared. Good corporate parenting was accomplished which resulted in a good outcome for Kristian and his fellow pupils. The designated teacher at Special L School is the Associate Head Teacher. She has a good understanding of the difficulties experienced by looked after children, and young people who had been subject to sexual abuse.

Mainstream C : Lennie (July 2004→)

Towards the end of the summer term of Year 8, I received a telephone call from the Teacher in Charge (i/C) of the Asperger's Unit at Mainstream C. She informed me that Lennie had been verbally and physically aggressive to staff and the decision had been made to exclude him from school. It was necessary to remove

him from the school premises and neither the carers nor social worker could be contacted. I indicated surprise that there had been such a rapid deterioration in his behaviour since the PEP meeting (2 months' earlier). I was told that what was more significant was the deterioration in the relationship between the school and Social Services. The Teacher i/C informed me that she had requested a multi-agency professionals' meeting the previous day and the Social Work Team Manager and the Learning Support Team Manager had attended. I again expressed surprise that, as Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children, I had not been included and was told that the assumption was that, since I worked for Social Services, the social worker would have invited me. The school was feeling totally unsupported by Social Services and were considering permanent exclusion. I agreed to resolve the immediate problem of removing Lennie from the school premises and facilitated this.

It was subsequently decided that Lennie would be given a fixed term exclusion of ten days. I asked to be involved in the re-admission meeting and agreed with the Teacher in Charge that a member of my staff (Learning Support Worker) would undertake some work with him during the summer holidays, around behavioural issues. Lennie was included on a short residential holiday organised by my team and again behaviour and social skills could be focused on.

At the beginning of Year 9, on his re-admission to school, the Learning Support Worker provided some in-class support for Lennie in the mainstream lessons that he found difficult. I also did some observations. At that time Lennie's behaviour was unmanageable and he was refusing to attend most of the lessons that he had in the mainstream setting. When he did, he was rude to both teachers and peers and disrupted the learning of others. He also demonstrated high levels of anxiety. At the end of the school day, he became calm and would apologise to the teachers to whom he had been rude. The social worker had only seen Lennie after school and so was unaware of his difficulties and how this impacted on his behaviour. My view was that Lennie was unable to access the provision, causing him high levels of anxiety that were manifested by his disruptive behaviour, and that consideration should be given to identifying an alternative specialist placement for him. When

the school had previously attempted to discuss this option with the social worker, he had been very resistant to this because he had no evidence that the placement was not able to meet his needs. This had resulted in the school feeling unsupported by the social worker and the consideration of permanent exclusion to facilitate the desired outcome for Lennie. With the involvement of MAST (both myself and the Learning Support Worker), as specialist workers for looked after children, our views were valued by the social worker. Following an early statement review, a place was secured for Lennie in a residential school for pupils with Asperger's Syndrome. Lennie settled well in the school and was soon achieving in line with his academic ability.

Details of a semi-structured interview with Lennie are recorded later in this chapter.

Conclusions

A summary of the outcomes of the incidents is recorded in the table 5.1 below

Table 5.1 Summary of case studies

Case	What worked?	Why?	What Went Wrong?	Why?	What could have made a difference?
Trudy	Successful transition from special to mainstream school	Good collaboration + involvement of other agencies	Earlier planning needed – Year 6	Prevent repeating Year 7	Consideration of transfer at SEN review in Year 5/6
Mark	Identification of appropriate provision	School able to meet behavioural needs	Re-integration programme – Special L Refusal to attend Special B	Timescale for educational placement - 20 days of entry to care Inappropriate response to incident by Designated Teacher	More careful planning of re-integration and/or identification of an appropriate educational placement Adherence to correct Child Protection procedures
George	Individual tuition	Appropriate to George's learning needs	Mainstream school Small groups with behavioural difficulties	Unable to access learning Disrupted learning + influenced George's behaviour	More appropriate provision – small group with teaching at correct level Appropriate support to facilitate learning Other pupils not to have behavioural difficulties
Zena	Accessing suitable placement	Difficulty accessing learning in mainstream school	Learning needs not assessed Bullying	English as a Second Language Poor self-esteem contributed to by self perception as academic 'failure'	Full assessment in terms of learning difficulties/needs Appropriate support for learning, e.g. small targeted groups

Case	What worked?	Why?	What Went Wrong?	Why?	What could have made a difference?
Colin	Co-operation of mother with school	Valued placement in the school – day placement enabled living at home	Lack of collaboration between school and Social Services	Designated Teacher appeared to have little/ no understanding of needs of LAC nor need for multi-agency working	Training need
Wendy	Sustaining placement in school	Effective collaboration	X	X	
Ian	Sustaining Ian's placement in school	Effective collaboration	X	X	
Dan	Accessing and maintaining educational provision	Flexibility of Education Other	Dan not fulfilling academic potential	Examination entries restricted by provision	Placement in a specialist school that could manage behaviour and facilitate learning
Kristian	Inclusion in an extra-curricular activity	Collaboration between carer, school and social worker	X	X	
Lennie	Accessing appropriate specialist educational provision	Lennie unable to access mainstream provision	Disciplinary procedures used inappropriately	Lack of support for school from social worker	Earlier multi-agency working to assess suitability of mainstream provision for Lennie and identify alternatives

All of these incidents demonstrate the positive benefits of multi-agency working. The two incidents that demonstrated a lack of collaboration (Mark and Colin) both had poor outcomes for the young people. Whilst there could be no guarantees that collaboration would have resulted in positive outcomes, the incidents recorded of effective collaboration all had positive outcomes for the individual pupils (Wendy, Ian, Lennie, Zena, Dan, Kristian, Trudy). What is not clear is whether the outcomes would have been different if only one agency had been involved. However, it is fairly clear that for Lennie, although the outcome may have been the same, *i.e.* change of provision, this would most certainly have been via the disciplinary route if Social Services had not been involved. This almost certainly would have damaged Lennie's self-esteem. Trudy's transfer to mainstream was initiated by the carer and there was no indication that any consideration had been given to this possibility by any professional involved.

The outcome for George was less clear, in that it provided a solution for the adults at the expense of George's educational opportunities. However, the intention was to increase his educational provision if he engaged with his individual tuition and this subsequently occurred, so that in addition to the four hours tuition, he had two afternoons of activities as part of a group at Education Other. It may be that for him the positive outcome was that his behaviour was not allowed to deteriorate. The success of this can be evidenced by him maintaining his supported lodgings placement, that was at risk of being terminated when he was having behavioural difficulties at Education Other, as he was behaving in a similar way in that setting.

The incident about the postponement of the PEP meeting is included to illustrate the need for designated teachers to have the time, as well as the commitment, to fulfil the responsibilities of the post (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 2004). In the initial interview, this designated teacher was concerned about the magnitude of post and the importance of "setting [PEP meetings] up properly".

Whilst many professionals were convinced of the positive benefits of multi-agency working, the collaborative process undoubtedly involved larger numbers of people, than if the work had been undertaken by single agencies. For corporate parenting

to be effective, there appears to be a need for multi-agency collaboration and working. However, many studies had indicated that looked after young people did not want to be seen as ‘different’ and that school provided an opportunity for normality (see, for example, DfEE/DoH, 2000; SEU, 2003). Therefore, it seemed necessary to attempt to ascertain the views of the young people who were subjected to corporate parenting.

Perceptions of Young People

“One of the reasons that the foster care research is confusing and insufficient is because it glosses over the children’s perceptions. Much of the existing research on foster children’s experience is based on adults’ retrospective accounts, which are filtered by further years and memories.”
(Finkelstein *et al*, 2002, p. 2)

To gain the perceptions of young people around the contribution of corporate parenting to improve their educational experience, it was decided to interview seven pupils from four of the five schools involved in the project. At this time, the fifth school, Special B, did not have any pupils who were in the public care of Shiretown. The pupils selected were –

Mainstream A	Wendy
	Ian
Mainstream C	Lennie
	Nellie
Special L	Jack
Education Other	Dan
	Linda

These young people were selected because six of the seven had experienced considerable difficulties in school, in terms of their inappropriate behaviour. For five of them, this had resulted in considerable multi-agency working to maintain or access placements. Nellie was included as a pupil who was achieving well, with

no reported behavioural difficulties. She was included to ascertain whether her perceptions of 'corporate parenting' were significantly different from those who had experienced multi-agency working as a result of their behavioural difficulties.

Background

Wendy and Ian

Relevant details about the care and school histories of Wendy and Ian are reported earlier in this chapter, together with case studies.

Lennie

Lennie had been looked after by Shiretown Council for one year. Prior to this, he was cared for by a family member. This arrangement broke down because of the mental health problems of the carer but Lennie continued to have contact. Lennie had subsequently been placed in a long-term foster placement.

Lennie had been diagnosed as having Asperger's Syndrome and attended a special unit for that disorder located in Mainstream C. Lennie was of above average ability but had behavioural difficulties, which made his placement in this specialist provision appropriate. Lennie accessed mainstream lessons and this was where his behaviour had been problematic. Details of an incident that resulted in a 10-day fixed-term exclusion are recorded earlier (pp. 110-112).

Nellie

Nellie was dual heritage, White/Asian. She had been taken into the care of Shiretown at the beginning of Year 6 because of poor parenting, due to mother's substance misuse. Nellie's older sister and brother-in-law were her carers. Nellie did not have any changes of school as a result of her becoming looked after and had completed Year 9, at the time of the interview.

The school reported that Nellie was an average ability student, with a good attitude to work. She would be expected to achieve well in GCSEs and go on to further

and higher education, if she wished to. She had good interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. There were no reported behavioural difficulties.

Jack

Jack had been removed from the family home when he was six because he and another sibling were deemed to have suffered abuse from an older sibling. Mother had made the decision that the older sibling should remain in the family home, necessitating the removal of the two younger children.

Jack had a statement of special educational needs (SEN) for moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and attended Special L. Within the MLD range, Jack was an able student, who worked well. However, he had had occasional temper outbursts, which had caused concern for the school, in terms of the safety of other pupils. There had been a decline in the frequency of these as Jack matured but he had recently commenced counselling and this had aroused some anger in him that he found difficult to defuse. Jack had been given a one-day fixed-term exclusion for an outburst in the week preceding the interview.

Dan

Relevant details about the care and school histories of Dan are reported earlier in this chapter, together with case studies.

At the time of the interview, Dan had been living with his mother for 18 months (on a Care Order), receiving regular respite care with one of Shiretown's Community Parents, i.e. a professional carer. Education Other had reported a marked improvement in his attitude and behaviour. He had been included in a university summer school organized by University of Southampton for looked after children. This had been a successful experience for him and he was expressing the desire to continue into further and higher education.

Linda

At the time of the interview, Linda had been looked after by Shiretown Borough Council for three years, following the sudden death of her mother and a failed attempt by an older sibling to care for the family. Linda had been placed in long-term foster care some distance from Shiretown, which necessitated a change of primary school. This placement broke down due to health problems of the carer. Although she moved placements during the school summer holiday, the social worker had been unable to access her a Year 7 secondary place until several weeks into the start of the academic year. This was obviously not satisfactory, given that she had a different start date from the other pupils in her year group, and probably contributed to Linda steadfastly refusing to attend school, within weeks of commencing. This had resulted in a breakdown in the foster placement. Linda then had two placements in children's homes. In the first she continued to refuse to attend school, in line with the culture in the home. In the second, located some distance from Shiretown, two hours a day individual tuition was provided for her.

A further foster placement was accessed during the school summer holidays and MAST workers negotiated a re-integration programme with Education Other and the Education Inclusion Team, to attempt to provide her with education, whilst aiming to re-integrate her into a mainstream secondary school during Year 8. However, the foster carer with whom she was placed, decided that she would attend mainstream immediately at the start of the academic year. The social worker did not challenge this. The carer was a retired special needs teacher.

At the start of year 8, Linda refused to attend school and a very slow integration programme had to be devised for her. Some of her behaviour appeared to demonstrate some level of school phobia, e.g. having a panic attack in the reception area of the school. For the carer, there was no option but for Linda to attend school full-time. It appeared that the carer felt that she had failed if Linda was unable to accomplish this. Attendance was rewarded by expensive gifts. Linda's behaviour began to deteriorate and this resulted in her having frequent lengthy, fixed-term exclusions. It appeared that Linda had found a way not to

have to go to school, without having to refuse and face a confrontation with the carer. The carer was not informing Social Services of the dates of re-admission or pastoral support plan meetings.

At the beginning of the summer term, Linda was extremely verbally aggressive to a teacher, which resulted in her being permanently excluded. From the report of the incident, it appeared to have been a deliberate act on Linda's part to obtain this outcome. Education for Linda was accessed and commenced within two days of this exclusion, even before governor ratification, both to minimize disruption in the placement and to prevent Linda becoming too entrenched in having no education. The foster placement broke down shortly after due to Linda making an allegation against the carer. Linda was placed in another Shiretown foster placement and so was able to continue to attend the pupil referral unit of Education Other.

Interviews

My post as Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Pupils for Shiretown Council afforded me the opportunity to have regular professional contact with the young people in public care of the authority. Of course, the post also gave me a level of authority which may have caused difficulties in choice for the young people I wished to interview, i.e. they may have felt unable to decline to be interviewed. Given that I also manage the multi-agency support team, I regularly undertake sporting/leisure activities and residential holidays with the young people (organised by the ActionSport Development Worker) to allow me to establish a positive relationship with them. I asked the social workers of all the young people identified if there was any reason why I should not approach the carer(s) to inform them of my intention to ask the young people if they would agree to be interviewed. As no difficulties were identified, I approached the carers. For young people living with relatives, I requested permission to conduct the interviews. Parental permission was sought, if the young person was voluntarily accommodated. With carers informed and appropriate approval obtained, I then approached the seven young people. I was careful to explain that they should not

feel any compulsion to take part in the interviews. For the two young people who had moderate learning difficulties, I was particularly mindful to establish that they understood what I wished them to take part in and that they should only do so if they wanted to. On request, all seven of them agreed to be interviewed.

The interviews were conducted either in the carer's home or in a soft-furnished room at a council premises. Given that it was the school summer holidays, I was able to organise the interviews to occur during the day. Each interview lasted between 30-45 minutes. At each of the interviews, only the young person and I were present. The purpose of the interview was explained to each of the young people and their permission was gained to audio-record the interviews. All seven of them agreed to this.

A schedule had been devised for the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 8), consisting of seven topics together with probes designed to illuminate the question, to refocus the discussion or expand on the information that was being sought. The questions included in the script were designed to obtain information from the young people on their perceptions of:

- The difficulties that they have experienced in education.
- How various agencies handled the difficulties that they had experienced.
- Areas where they felt they were succeeding in school.
- How their social worker/carers could improve their educational experience.
- What schools/teachers could do differently to improve the situation for looked after children.
- Who involved in corporate parenting had made the biggest difference to their educational experience.

Whilst the interviews followed the schedule, supplementary questions were used either as a result of getting an unexpected answer or following up some interesting line of discussion from the interviewee.

Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the seven young people. Having obtained accurate transcripts of the interviews the next stage was to attempt an initial analysis in terms of identifying the major themes emerging from them. This was undertaken by a preliminary and primary analysis, where the data were examined, notes made in margins and parts of the script highlighted.

In line with the interview script, from the seven annotated transcripts, it was possible to identify some major themes, as follows:

1. Difficulties in education;
2. Satisfaction of handling of incidents by ‘corporate parents’;
3. Satisfaction with support of corporate parents;
4. Response to many people being involved in support network; and
5. Identification of main supporter.

A descriptive analysis of the data follows:

1. Difficulties in education

Six of the seven young people identified inappropriate behaviour as their main difficulty in education –

“Fighting and this and that.” (Dan, 2004)

“My temper lets me down.” (Jack, 2004)

“Behaviour. Where shall I start?” [laughs] (Linda, 2004)

“... in class – just normal expectations. Like what the teacher expects me to do and I won’t do it.” (Wendy, 2004).

Although the young people were aware that their behaviour in school was inappropriate, for some of them, there was a lack of awareness of reasons for it –

“I get a bit silly and distracted by my friends.” (Wendy, 2004)

“It’s just the way I am, I guess. (Ian, 2004)

“It’s just me.” (Linda, 2004)

They appeared to think that it was a ‘given’ and, therefore, not something that they could influence or change. However, three of them were able to put a contextual framework around their behavioural difficulties –

- Both Lennie and Jack were the victims of bullying and some of their behavioural difficulties arose as a result of this –

“At school, pupils asking me different questions about [carer] – asking me my personal business. So I used to get, erm, a bit angry and tell them to “Shut up!” and say nasty stuff.” (Jack, 2004)

- For some of the others, there was recognition of reasons for their behavioural difficulties –

“Following the wrong crowd.” (Dan, 2004)

“I go to school all angry and upset and I take it out on others.” (Jack, 2004)

For three of the young people, attendance was an issue. Both Linda and Dan had truanted and/or refused education. Linda identified the reasons she disliked school–

“... being in a classroom with loads of people. I can’t do that. There is something about it I don’t like.” (Linda, 2004)

Nellie’s attendance difficulties had been pre-care –

“When I was with mum I didn’t hardly go to school because mum was a bit drunk and she didn’t send me to school. So I got to go every other day or something. And it was quite bad

because – it was - I didn't really do quite well then.” (Nellie, 2004)

Not surprisingly, this impacted on her attitude to school –

“I didn't really care.” (Nellie, 2004)

Nellie had had very few difficulties in school since being looked after by her older sister and brother-in-law. The only occasion she could recall was when she was concerned about her mother's health, but she was no longer concerned because –

“I now realise that mum actually lies about it – I just don't worry about it too much. Try and concentrate instead.”
(Nellie, 2004)

Nellie was probably able to rationalize this because she was in kinship care and thus able to discuss, with her sister, her relationship difficulties with mother, without feeling disloyal to her family. Given that her sister was considerably older than her and had the support of her partner, Nellie had presumably assessed that her sister could give her the support she needed to be able to voice these feelings. Nellie's sister was also supported by a Kinship Care Link Worker.

Only Ian felt that he had any difficulty with learning, although both Dan and Linda acknowledged that they had gaps in their learning caused by poor attendance.

2. Satisfaction of handling of incidents by corporate parents

Six of the seven young people had exhibited behaviour in school that had necessitated multi-agency intervention, either in terms of meetings or support packages. Of the six, only two were happy with how the various agencies had handled the situation(s). Wendy admitted that although she had been reluctant to co-operate with the support provided –

“ ... at the time I really wasn't listening to anyone. I didn't think it was helping me but, after a while, I realised it was

helping me. And teachers were starting to say very different things to me than they were before. That's really good."

(Wendy, 2004)

Wendy was alluding to teachers commenting on the improvement in her attitude and behaviour in the classroom.

By her own admission, Linda deliberately behaved in a way to get excluded from school, so she accepted multi-agency meetings as inevitable. The four who were not happy with the multi-agency interventions gave different reasons for this –

- Ian disliked any social services involvement because he did not want to be seen as different, so his comment was –

"Just leave it to the teachers." (Ian, 2004)

- Dan was critical of there being too many people involved –

"Not all of them needed to be there." (Dan, 2004)

He acknowledged that various agencies needed to be represented but felt that there should not be two people from the same organisation and some people could just submit a report.

- Both Lennie and Jack were critical of their social workers not responding quickly enough when the school notified them of difficulties –

- "I think [social worker] could have been more involved." (Lennie, 2004)

- Jack was concerned because his carer had not received any support - "... because I went missing from school and they didn't have any clue where I was so [carer] was upset 'cos I run out of school and she was

upset and obviously they phoned her – she needed some help ...” (Jack, 2004)

Lennie was also very critical of the school for not implementing a system whereby he could leave the classroom if he was upset or angry, rather than his behaviour escalating to an unacceptable level. He said that this was one of the things that the Head of the Asperger’s Unit had agreed to implement but had not done so. He felt that she had also not prevented him from being bullied or shared necessary information with other teachers –

“... she says she will sort it [bullying] out, she should but she hasn’t.” (Lennie, 2004)

“... she said she would tell the teachers – all my teachers ... but she hasn’t told everybody.” (Lennie, 2004)

Given that Lennie had Asperger’s Syndrome, it might not have been surprising that he would favour a system, e.g. a card to allow him to withdraw himself from class. However, his disappointment appeared to be that people had not fulfilled their promises, if not their responsibilities, to him.

3. Satisfaction with support of corporate parents

All of the young people felt that their carers gave them enough support for their education. Five of them felt supported, in education, by their social workers; Jack and Lennie did not. Six of the seven felt that the school was supportive. As previously mentioned, Lennie was critical.

All of the interviewees were happy in their educational placements. Ian stated that he –

“... did not like school but I know the importance of it” and that he “... would rather go to [Mainstream A] than any other”.
(Ian, 2004)

Dan and Linda had both been permanently excluded from mainstream schools and had truanting behaviour. At the time of the interviews, both were on roll of Education Other and their attendance rates were good. Both of them referred to teacher attention as being of importance to them:

“.. you can be one to one in lessons which means you can get more... attention – so like your needs can be met. The teachers ain’t like they are at school ... because at school you have teachers who say something and then expect you to get on with it and if you are stuck they might help you but if it is something that they think you can do, they will expect you to get on with it and then check afterwards. At Education Other, they will help you more than what normal school would and give you more advice on what to do and if you miss something, they will go back on it, whereas in mainstream school you have got classes of 30, so if you miss something, they can’t really go back because then everyone has to go back. So it means it gives you more time to learn what you need to know.” (Dan, 2004)

“... basically because there is about five or six of you in a group and it is like ... better off than being in a class of 32, 33 people. And the difference has been – like being in a big class, like you only get one person and with five or six of us, you get four people, like teacherwise, who help you out and stuff. It’s like, say I am struggling with my work or something, one of the helpers will come over to me and like one of the boys are finding it difficult, they will still have like another member of staff to come over to them.” (Linda, 2004)

Bhabra *et al.* (2002) identified that Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils, who had missed significant amounts of their education, may benefit from special provision, rather than mainstream school. Both Dan and Linda were able students with good literacy

skills. For them it appeared to be a lack of patience in accessing help, when they required it, rather than special educational needs. This behaviour could be because they had insecure attachments that were manifested in seeking immediate adult attention.

Linda also identified that she did not like changes of teachers –

“‘Cos like when you go up to secondary school, an’ that, it’s like you got more than one teacher in the class and I can’t be doing with that – I can only sort of like – sort of like – I get to know one teacher and another one comes along – like supply teachers.” (Linda, 2004)

She stated that -

“... primary school was jokes ... I loved it ... I would give anything to go back to primary school.” (Linda, 2004)

Although she attributed this to having one teacher for most subjects and one who she had a good relationship with, Linda’s mother died when she was in Year 6. Therefore, for most of her primary school career, she was living with her birth family. Therefore, it was difficult to capture what had made primary school such a positive experience for her.

4. Response to many people being involved in support network

The interviewees were asked to comment on their experiences of the many meetings that were necessitated by their looked after status, e.g. personal education plan and statutory review meetings. Two of them disliked them –

“I don’t like it.” (Ian, 2004)

“It is just irritating ... every single meeting – it is just the same all the time.” (Linda, 2004)

Linda also felt that she was not listened to in meetings –

“It’s like they go ahead and make all these decisions and stuff and they don’t even ask me if this is alright for you, they just go ahead and do it. ... They will be talking and stuff, and they are talking about you as if I weren’t in the room. And that just pees me off.” (Linda, 2004)

For Dan, the meetings were acceptable if only people who needed to be there attended. For the other four, the meetings felt supportive –

“It feels okay. It feels like people are trying to help.” (Nellie, 2004)

“I am glad that people help me out.” (Jack, 2004)

“It’s alright.” (Lennie, 2004)

“Yes, it is fine. That just means that more and more people are willing to help me.” (Wendy, 2004)

5. Identification of main supporter.

Young people were asked to identify the person who had made the most difference to their educational experience or given the most support. Of the seven young people, four identified their carer(s) and gave the following reasons:

“Cos ... they like help with homework and stuff, keep reminding me that education is really important because of getting a job when I am older.” (Nellie, 2004)

“Because [carer] has been there all the time for me, even though I have put her through hell.” (Jack, 2004)

“Because she has been the one that has always been there for me. ... she would be straight there and she would help me out if she could.” (Dan, 2004)

“She has always, always been there. She is always at my meetings, she is never not at any of my important meetings and she is there to support me.” (Wendy, 2004)

For these young people, their carers could have been the positive adult role model that Jackson and Martin (1998) identified as being significant in their study of educational high achievers. The remaining three identified various people as main supporters –

- Ian identified Shiretown’s Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children. This would be in line with his thinking of leaving education to the teachers.

- Lennie identified ‘Social Services’ because –

“That’s what they are there for, isn’t it?” (Lennie, 2004)

He subsequently narrowed this to his social worker –

“... ‘cos really, when I think about it now, she is the only one who really understands how I feel. I don’t know why but with [social worker] I think she understands how I feel.” (Lennie, 2004)

He had only been in care for a few months, whilst his social worker had known him longer than this. Therefore, in terms of length of time, she would be the most significant individual, although he had criticized her for lack of involvement in his latest exclusion.

- Linda identified the Head of Year at her previous mainstream school. Linda had had a succession of carers and at the time of interview had only been in the foster placement for two weeks. Therefore, the Head of Year may have represented

stability for her. Those she identified as wanting more support from were:

1. Her 'step dad' – a friend of her late mother who lived geographically some distance from her and only had very occasional telephone contact; and
2. A former foster carer who lived 50 miles from her. This placement only ended because of carer ill-health. Again only infrequent contact.

Linda was unable to explain why she chose these people as supporters but agreed with the hypothesis that they were people who cared about her but their geographical distance prevented them from being too involved. Linda had, by her own admission, behaved in a way to break down a foster placement, if the carer pressurised her to attend school (when she was in mainstream). Presumably the physical distance and apparent lack of regular contact of her 'desired supporters' allowed her to avoid immediate realities, whilst nurturing an ideal.

Conclusions

From the analysis of the interview data, the following inferences may be made –

- (i) Young people who had difficulties in behaviour in an educational setting were able to acknowledge this but not always able to contextualise it.
- (ii) The seven young people interviewed all accepted that, because they were in public care, multi-agency meetings occurred and were necessary. It was the composition of attendees and/or the way they were conducted that there was some objection to. The following points arose as a result of this-
 - a) Meetings that focused on a young person could make them feel different. Each young person needed to be informed of the purpose

of the meetings being held but should have had a choice as to whether they attended or could give their views and receive feedback outside of the meetings.

- b) The number of attendees needed to be kept to a minimum, unless the young person requested the attendance of specific individuals.
- c) If a young person was present at the meeting, they should be encouraged and supported to actively participate.

Whilst these points would appear to follow good practice, there were indicators that it was not always occurring. The literature identified that school provided looked after young people with the environment and opportunities for 'normality in their lives' (Fletcher-Campbell and Hall, 1990). Multi-agency collaboration must be conducted sensitively to ensure that this is not impaired. The information from the interviews needed to be given to Shiretown's designated teachers and social workers to ensure that the meetings were more acceptable to the young person.

- (iii) Carers appear to be identified by the young people as the main advocates for their education. This would appear to support the findings of Harker *et al.* (2003), when they surveyed young people about who most supported their education. Training for Shiretown's carers needs to convey this message and encourage them to embrace this role.
- (iv) There was no obvious difference in the perceptions about corporate parenting with the young person who did not have any identified educational difficulties.

The interviews also highlighted examples of professional behaviour that assisted the young people and contributed to them having more stability in their placements and should, therefore, be identified, nurtured and maintained to provide short- and medium-term benefits for them. Examples of this were identifying and accessing alternative educational provision for young people who were having extreme

difficulties in mainstream, which resulted in permanent exclusions. Whilst there was agreement that looked after young people were, if possible, to be educated in mainstream provision (DfEE/DoH, 2000), there was the recognition that some young people benefited from alternative provision (Bhabra *et al.*, 2002).

The drive for schools to become more inclusive, may make accessing small group provision easier in that this should be available in mainstream schools. However, as a consequence of this, it is possible that the separate provision that traditionally provided small group provision, e.g. pupil referral units, may be phased out. However, those involved in corporate parenting should ensure that the individual needs of each looked after child are considered and prioritised and that appropriate provision should be a principal consideration.

Conversely, the interviews highlighted some professional behaviour that needed to be severely challenged, including –

- 1) Fixed term exclusions being used regularly to attempt to change inappropriate behaviour.
- 2) Permanent exclusions from specialist provision being used for vulnerable young people.
- 3) Carers being allowed to make decisions in opposition to the views of the professionals, e.g. choice of school.

For 1) and 2), schools should be supported by carers and other professionals to implement interventions that will facilitate change in the young person's behaviour. This should avoid exclusions, which may further reinforce the rejection that so many looked after young people have already experienced and which may further damage their self-esteem. In terms of 2), most specialist educational provision is independent of the state sector and, therefore, there is little recall if that provision decides to withdraw a place for a young person, i.e. exclusion. Therefore, it is essential to ascertain whether the provision can meet the needs of the young person and is able to manage the behaviour that it is seeking to

change. Social workers and local education authorities' special needs officers need to work closely to identify suitable placements. For 3), whilst the carer's wishes should be taken into account when identifying a school for an individual young person, if there have been particular difficulties, e.g. school refusal/phobia, the professionals should take the ultimate responsibility for choice. Link workers for foster carers should be involved in this, to attempt to ensure that the carer does not feel alienated by the process.

The young people's perceptions on corporate parenting need to inform future professional practice, to facilitate a improvement to the educational experiences of Shiretown's looked after cohort. The next chapter records the final phase of the research study and attempts to ascertain, from designated teachers and social workers, their perceptions on whether, since the start of the study, there has been an improvement in collaborative working between these professionals.

CHAPTER 6 : RESEARCH STUDY – FINAL PHASE

End of study interviews

Designated Teachers

In 2002, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all five of the designated teachers in the sample. Given that Shiretown Borough Council delayed the implementation of the Guidance (DfEE/DoH, 2000) until early 2002, the designated teachers were very newly appointed, at the time of the interviews. Therefore, these interviews gave a good indication of their perceptions on the situation at that time, i.e. before the implementation of Personal Education Plan meetings and recommendations to social workers about their role/responsibilities in the education of looked after children. From the interviews, the following major themes emerged -

1. Insight into needs/difficulties of children in public care (CiPC)
2. Understanding of other professionals' roles/difficulties
3. Examples of previous co-operation
4. Opportunities and desire to work collaboratively/share information
5. Mechanisms and framework for information sharing

During the course of the study period, incidents in the five sample schools were reported that indicated the level of collaboration that had occurred, from the focus of designated teachers. Whilst these gave evidence of the contribution of the designated teachers to the corporate parenting of the looked after pupils in their schools, by re-interviewing them at the end of the study period, it was anticipated that it would be possible to capture their views on the effectiveness of collaborative working with social workers and carers and give indications of how this could be improved.

Four of the five of the previous interviewees were still in post in the sample schools and undertaking the role of designated teacher for Pupils in Public Care for

their respective schools. The fifth (JA) had undertaken the role in another school in the same local educational authority before transferring to Mainstream A.

Following previous practice, a schedule was devised for the semi-structured interviews that contained eight core topics (see Appendix 9). In addition, the previous interview transcripts were examined to enable further topics to be addressed with the individual teachers who had raised separate issues –

- Process for organizing the PEP meetings (CH, SB)
- Involvement of school in statutory reviews (CH)
- Working with residential children's homes (CH, SB, ZL)

I approached all five of the prospective interviewees to seek their agreement to participating in the research, again giving information about the format and purpose of the interview. Four of the five designated teachers gave immediate agreement to the interview and agreed for it to be audio-recorded. The fifth, EL, did not respond to my e-mail request. About a week later I met him in person at an event at the school. In response to my query of whether he had considered my request, he indicated that whilst he was busy, he would probably agree but I should contact him again personally for final agreement, in three weeks' time. After three weeks, over a further period of two weeks when I rang the school, six times, he was always unavailable to speak to me and did not respond to the messages I left with his secretary. On my seventh telephone contact with his secretary, I was informed that EL had decided that he would not agree to be interviewed. This response did not surprise me, in that the incidents reported (Mark [pp. 91-92] and Colin, [pp. 99-101]) indicated an unwillingness to work collaboratively with other professionals. From the original interview with EL, he did not acknowledge that the position of designated teacher and the implementation of the Guidance, would alter his practice, given that he stated in terms of this:

“... I was a bit ambivalent in my getting involved in it because ... I am doing this anyway.” (EL, 2002)

During the course of the study, in addition to the two incidents that resulted in child protection issues with two looked after young people, Social Services also initiated the removal of one of the governors, from the Special B's governing body. The author's post, as Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children, had necessitated involvement in all of these incidents.

An hour's appointment was booked with the four who had agreed to be interviewed. This was separate from any contact with them in the author's professional capacity. All of the interviews were undertaken at the work bases of the interviewees. The interviews were conducted as planned, with no difficulties being encountered with the audio-recording. Field notes were also taken. As well as covering the schedule, interesting lines of discussion were also explored.

From the recordings, *verbatim* transcripts were produced, which were then presented to the interviewees for validation and permission to include in the study. All four respondents signed the transcripts as a true representation of the discussions, without any alteration or deletion and gave permission for the material to be used.

Having obtained accurate transcripts of the interviews, an initial analysis was undertaken in terms of identifying the major themes emerging from them. In line with the previous analyses of semi-structured interviews, described on page 65, the scripts were annotated by highlighting points and making comments in the margins, etc. To summarise this data from the annotated scripts, a table was constructed to enable data to be marshalled behind the categories and sub-categories (see Appendix 10). From this tabulation, it was possible to identify the following major themes, which aligned with the interview schedules:

- a) The role and contribution of the designated teacher to corporate parenting
- b) Communication systems
- c) Barriers to collaborative working
- d) Insight into needs/difficulties of children in public care
- e) Examples of good collaboration

- f) Lack of collaboration
- g) Frameworks for effective information sharing
- h) Understanding of other professionals' roles
- i) Inclusive schools

The following section is a descriptive analysis of the data.

a) The role and contribution of the designated teacher to corporate parenting

All of the designated teachers interviewed felt that the role contributed to the education of looked after children by providing a point of contact for both the children and school staff. The role was described as having 'an overview' (ZL, 2004) and all of the teachers stated that, whilst all teachers were involved in the pastoral care of the pupils, the designated teacher provided the 'fast track' or 'channel' (SB, 2004) to Social Services for this group of pupils.

In two of the schools, the designated teacher undertook all of the additional tasks associated with looked after young people, e.g. Personal Education Plan meetings. CH felt that this was manageable if the number, in school at any one time, was low. Whereas, at the previous interview, she had been concerned that undertaking the role effectively would involve large amounts of time, she was now more realistic about it, insomuch as she realised that her stated ideal of the designated teacher being –

“... totally involved in their (looked after children's) lives” (CH, 2002)

was the 'vision' and could only be achieved if she only had that role, otherwise it was 'a balancing act'. However, the numbers of looked after children at Mainstream C. had fallen, so that –

“... it is much easier to find the right amount of time for two students than for ten. So it is really a numbers thing.” (CH, 2004)

All of the designated teachers felt that the substantive position in the school of the designated teacher was important, although there was some disagreement about for whom this was important. SB felt that, in terms of the staff group, the personality of the designated teacher was more important than the position but she conceded that as Associate Head Teacher, she had some freedom from timetables that was not enjoyed by classroom teachers and that, for social workers, the substantive position engendered more trust. Additionally, she felt that being on the senior management team was effective when dealing with parents/carers, particularly if the issues were of a sensitive nature. JA concurred that her substantive position as deputy head gave “that extra bit of clout” (JA, 2005) when dealing with other agencies, such as Social Services. Although she also felt that because the school had a good pastoral care system, so that staff would respond to whoever was undertaking the role, her position did enable her to arrange for a pupil to be involved in an activity and “staff will go along with it” (JA, 2005). ZL was clear that his position as Head of Education Other made him more effective as designated teacher because –

“I am the one who says it has to happen. I have got the ultimate authority.” (ZL, 2004)

CH thought that being deputy head, with the authority to make things happen, had been essential in fulfilling the post effectively. She felt that it was important from a leadership viewpoint and as part of the leadership team, in that she could make others on the team realise the importance of the role. In terms of dealing with other staff members, CH felt that it was “who you are, rather than your position” that mattered but acknowledged that, as deputy head, she had “more clout” (CH, 2004).

Three of the four designated teachers acknowledged that they undertook a training and information filtering role (CH, JA and SB).

b) Communication systems

Three of the four designated teachers were in agreement that good communication systems were vital to corporate parenting and highlighted that to enable them to fulfill the role effectively they needed Social Services to provide information and easily accessed communication systems. The designated teachers were divided about whether the role had improved communication with Social Services. ZL acknowledged that because he could link in with the Teacher/Advisor for LAC, communication had improved but with the caveat that –

“I don’t think overall we have particularly ... adequate relationship with Social Services over many of the children that we have.” (ZL, 2004)

CH felt that communication was variable –

“I think the linking with Social Services ... depends on who you are linking with. Some people are very good in getting back to you and communicating with you around the issues but I think it needs to be so much better.” (CH, 2004)

This is obviously a matter for quality assurance on the part of Social Service Departments. In the 8th Annual Report of the chief Inspector of Social Services, Platt (DoH, 1999) was concerned that –

“Social Services’ response ... should not be the lottery it currently is, based on geography and custom and practice.”
(1999, 4.1)

She commented that there was a lack of consistency within local authorities, despite national guidance, with people failing to use procedures. For Shiretown, senior management will need to address these inconsistencies before the national inspection process highlights it. The Government has demanded (DfEE/DoH, 2000) collaboration between those involved in corporate parenting to address the educational

difficulties of looked after children. Workers need to be aware of the procedures for undertaking this work and act accordingly. For the vulnerable young people involved, workers' lack of commitment to collaboration, evidenced by poor liaison, can have a disproportionately negative effect. An example of this was Mainstream C's actions re. Lennie, which were a direct result of Lennie's worker failing to liaise with the school and support his education.

Even where there was effective communication, CH felt that it needed to be undertaken more regularly rather than just when there was a problem. On the other hand, JA and SB both felt that communication was improved since the establishment of the role of designated teacher. SB felt that –

“... Social Services recognise that role ... it gives some credibility to the role with Social Services.” (SB, 2004)

c) Barriers to collaborative working

In addition to high numbers of looked after children, CH felt that staff attitudes could be a barrier in her school to the role of designated teacher being successful in terms of the outcomes for pupils in public care –

“Sometimes, although you try to raise awareness ... you have still some staff who you ... can't say things loudly enough or often enough for them to actually take it on board.” (CH, 2004)

JA mentioned lack of good communication with Social Services as being a barrier to the effectiveness of the role and also the lack of time allocated to the role within schools. ZL was concerned that the provision at Education Other could limit the success of the post, in that, within their resources, it was not possible to make “very special arrangements” for looked after young people. SB was concerned that the normal long-term planning, that was essential for the pupils at Special L, could be affected by unexpected placement moves –

“For someone with severe learning difficulties, there needs to be a lot of consistency and a lot of preparation if there are going to be changes.” (SB, 2004)

d) Insight into needs/difficulties of children in public care

All of the designated teachers recognised the difficulties experienced by children/young people in public care. SB was concerned about the disruptions caused by unplanned placement moves and subsequent changes in school that could result in the young person not being placed in the appropriate provision. JA recognised that although schools needed to make special provision for looked after pupils, it was important not to stigmatise them or “make them feel different” (JA, 2004). The difficulties mentioned by CH and ZL were in relation to their pre-care experiences -

“You know, I think the comment is: ‘It’s just sad what some of these young people have to go through.’ That is really the drive to try to get things right for them, try to put the work in to try and make sure they are supported and have what they deserve.” (CH, 2004)

ZL recognised that the emotional needs of looked after children could limit their educational achievements:

“If you can get the self-esteem and safety right ... old Maslow’s hierarchy of need ... then children will be confident enough to learn. Actually children will catch up learning – that’s a possibility. Children can’t always catch up feeling safe.” (ZL, 2004)

ZL also cited the practice of young people moving from foster care into supported lodgings on attaining 16 years of age as a factor that would almost certainly contribute to their underachievement in education –

“I would very much like to see them not being shoved out to grass at 16 ... I don’t believe that is good parenting at all.” (ZL, 2004)

e) Examples of good collaboration

All four of the interviewees gave several examples of good collaboration by those involved in corporate parenting to achieve good outcomes for looked after pupils. The following is a sample of the comments that they made during the interviews, which illustrate their perceptions about the improvement in the collaborative process with those involved in the corporate parenting of looked after pupils –

“I think that the way we collaborate has been very supportive and really excellent. It makes things so much easier for me and the young person.” (CH, 2004)

“One of them is J. – he went through a phase of very poor and unmanageable behaviour and ... everybody working together – us making sure that [children’s home] had the same behaviour plans and they were passed on to his mum. I think we were able to move forward a lot quicker than we would, if we had been working in isolation ...” [SB, 2004]

“I was thinking about A. – that was a huge success – I mean that was getting it right.” [JA, 2005]

“... I think L. would be an ideal one – she is current, she has got virtually a full-time placement, she is attending on time, we liaise with the children’s home – there is good communication.” [ZL, 2004]

f) Lack of collaboration

The interviewees were also asked to identify examples of where there had not been good collaboration to attempt to resolve difficulties for a looked after child.

Although two of the designated teachers reported examples of lack of collaboration, they involved social workers from other local authorities –

“... they have never come to meetings when they have been invited and there are lots of issues. ... I must have left ... six or eight messages on the answerphone of the [other local authority] social worker. ... I still never heard back from them – I have never heard back from them!” (SB, 2004)

“ ... he is from [other local authority] and I have never met anyone from there yet and they do not contribute to things. They send me the PEP paper, I fill it in, send it back and they don’t even say, ‘Oh thanks’. I have never, ever met the social worker and we just send his things in an envelope. It is such a shame because at the last review meeting it was so excellent, there was so much to celebrate for this young person and they weren’t there. I have rung and invited them to come but it is the same old – you ring and they are not there.” (CH, 2004)

g) Frameworks for effective information sharing

For three of the schools in the sample, the Personal Education Plan meetings were block booked, so that the meetings for all the young people were held on the same day. Two of the designated teachers (JA and CH) felt that this was helpful for their schools. SB liked this approach but felt that for parents/carers there could be some confusion with annual statement reviews if they were close together. She had experience, with another local authority, of combining a statutory review and Personal Education Plan meeting. This had been held at the school to facilitate her and the classroom teachers attending. This block booking approach had not been adopted at Education Other and ZL was concerned that PEPs were not consistently being implemented or reviewed.

h) Understanding of other professionals' roles

During the 2002 interviews, the issue was raised about the difference in roles between social workers and teachers. It was felt that their lack of understanding of each other's jobs was a barrier to 'joined up' working. The interviewees were asked to comment on whether this had improved during the study period. All agreed that there had been some improvement. Whilst JA felt that there was still some confusion, she thought that there was more compromise and this had improved the situation. She commented that the joint training day held –

“... helped me see who was involved and the different roles that people had – in the same way that I hoped that people learned what schools' involvement was – I think we need to do that more regularly.” (JA, 2004)

SB agreed that there was a need for multi-agency training.

i) Inclusive schools

The interviewees were asked to comment on two of the statements that had been made during the previous interviews in 2002. The first was –

“Schools want to be inclusive and work with other agencies to improve the educational experience of young people in public care but league tables militate against this.” (JA, 2002)

The two interviewees from mainstream secondary schools agreed with the statement in general but felt that the inclusive ethos of their schools balanced this –

“We certainly wouldn't debar any child from coming if we thought ... you know, even if we knew it was going to affect our league tables. It is a student's right. It is not their fault they are in the situation they are in.” [JA, 2004]

“Well I think here, league tables are league tables. We want every child as an individual, every child as special and we celebrate the children who have not perhaps got A*-C, which affect the league tables. ... The fact that that doesn't fit into the league tables, from our school's viewpoint, we don't care.”
(CH, 2004)

The second statement was:

“Schools are not judged by how happy their pupils are or the good behaviour of those pupils, they are judged by the standards – academic results.” (ZL, 2002)

ZL had made this statement in the 2002 interview and felt that the situation had not changed -

“It's true and I think it that's a shame – it's a shame. ... Some of the schools in Shiretown, the pupils are not bad, it is just that the schools haven't got it right.” (ZL, 2004)

The two mainstream designated teachers positioned the judging of schools by stakeholders other than the Government, i.e. parents -

“Depends who you are talking about judging ... Lots of parents choose schools because they know their child is going to be happy and well cared for and supported.” (JA, 2005)

“Parents know the league tables but you can come in here and walk around and judge for yourselves whether it is important.”
(CH, 2004)

For a special school, SB felt that the situation was completely the reverse –

“... if a parent was deciding to send a pupil to us or [another special school], they would go by the atmosphere, the staffing

levels, the care, the wellbeing of the child. ... the last thing they would go for would be asking us what our accredited systems were.” (SB, 2004)

The main partners around collaborative working to improve the educational experiences of looked after children were designated teachers and social workers. Therefore, it was important to survey the social workers on similar issues to those addressed with the designated teachers. Further discussion on the findings from these interviews are undertaken alongside the findings of this survey of the views and perceptions of social workers.

Social workers

At the end of the research period, I wished to explore whether there had been any changes in the perceptions, attitudes and professional practice of social workers on issues around co-operation between those involved in the corporate parenting of Shiretown’s population of young people in public care, in relation to education.

To ensure some consistency in the research, I wished to survey a group similar to that examined at the beginning of the study. At that time (2002), five social work teams caseheld statutory school age children in the public care of Shiretown Borough Council (see page 73-74, for details). In December 2004 the situation was similar to that in 2002, in that the majority (52%) of looked after children were caseheld by social workers in the Looked After Children’s Team (LACT). However, compared to 2002, there was a higher number of workers in the Disabled Children’s Team (DCT) who worked with school-aged looked after children. This may have been due to the team being fully staffed in 2004, whereas there was a 50% social work vacancy rate in that team in 2002. Again there were only three workers in the Leaving Care Team (LCT) who worked with young people of statutory school age.

The Looked After Children’s Team comprised 10 workers (two Assistant Team Managers, one Consultant Practitioner, six Social Workers and one Social Work

Assistant). Seven social workers (including two Assistant Team Managers) caseheld looked after children in the Disabled Children's Team and three Leaving Care Advisors (including the Team Manager) in the Leaving Care Team. Therefore, there was a total cohort of 19 social workers in the target group.

To maintain consistency with the 2002 survey and to ensure that this part of the study had procedural objectivity, a questionnaire was again employed (see Appendix 11). The initial questionnaire (2002) sought the views of social workers on issues around the educational difficulties experienced by looked after young people and looked at factors that contributed to or reduced them. It also sought their perceptions on the newly introduced initiatives from the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DoH, 2000). The purpose of undertaking a further survey with the social workers was to capture their views on the effectiveness of multi-agency working and the role of the designated teacher in facilitating this on behalf of the school. Therefore, it would not have been appropriate to use the original survey questions. More explicitly, the 2004 questionnaire was designed to collect data on participants' perceptions and views relating to:

- Frequency and purpose of contact with designated teachers in the schools attended by the looked after young people worked with.
- Contact with other members of school staff in the schools attended by the looked after young people worked with.
- Barriers to and enablers of collaborative work, e.g. different types of school and geographical location.
- The value of Personal Education Plans (PEPs).
- Effectiveness of schools in fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities. The value of multi-agency working.

- Changes to social work practice as a result of the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (2000).
- Future improvements to facilitate more effective multi-agency working.

The questionnaire comprised both closed and open questions. For the closed, pre-coded questions, an answer frame was provided that offered either dichotomous or multiple choice answer frameworks.

After obtaining permission from the Head of Children and Families' Service to undertake the survey with the identified social workers, the questionnaire was piloted with two workers from one of the teams not included in this part of the study. The workers caseheld a small number of looked after children of statutory school age. The questionnaire was piloted to ascertain if the respondents were able to understand the questions in terms of language and content, whether the questions gathered the data required and also the appropriateness of the order. The respondents reported that they had no difficulty in understanding the questions or responding to them on the answer frameworks. Therefore, no revisions were made to the format of the draft questionnaire.

The questionnaires were given to two of the teams in paper format and members of the third team were sent it electronically because they are located at some distance from the other teams. To ensure confidentiality, respondents were not asked to provide their names (although the nature of their role was collected for the purposes of identifying any differences in response patterns).

Completed questionnaires from 15 social workers (three LCT, five DCT and seven LACT) were returned within approximately seven working days. The remaining four questionnaires were not returned. Of these fifteen workers, seven had been involved in the previous survey (LCT – 1, DCT - 2; LACT –4). Of the eight who had not been involved, four had been employed in Shiretown, so were aware of the authority's initiatives; two had transferred from a neighbouring authorities and two were newly qualified social workers.

Analysis of data

As with the initial social worker survey, a descriptive analysis of the data was undertaken (see Appendix 12 for a full summary of data).

Only three of the 15 respondents had contact with the designated teachers in ‘all’ of the schools attended by the young people they worked with. A further three and five, respectively, had contact with ‘most’ or ‘some’ of the designated teachers. Of note was that four of the respondents reported that they had no contact with any designated teachers. There were no obvious differences between the teams on this response. Of those workers who had contact with designated teachers, eight of them identified Personal Education Plan meetings as the only contact. Two workers from the Disabled Children’s Team identified further contacts to give information about changes in care arrangements or communicate about behavioural difficulties. One from the Looked After Children’s Team identified telephone contact to give information about contact arrangements. One of the Leaving Care Team workers identified many opportunities for contact including discussions about behavioural issues, homework, extra support, achievements, etc. Although this worker was a Leaving Care Advisor because he worked with unaccompanied asylum seekers, he was a Connexions Advisor and probably the narrower role that he had to undertake, i.e. education and training, allowed and required him to establish positive relationships with the schools and subsequently the designated teachers. Three of the four workers, who stated that they did not have any contact with designated teachers, commented:

- Carers had the contact (DCT)
- Schools can be difficult to engage in collaborative working (DCT)
- Not all schools aware of role of designated teacher, or if they have one, and often the role can fall to Headteacher (DCT, LCT)

Given that the Guidance suggested that the designated teacher role should be undertaken by someone in the school, “with sufficient authority to make things

happen” (DfEE/DoH, 2000 p.32), Headteachers often undertook the role, particularly in small schools, i.e. special or primary schools. Therefore, the role of designated teacher could have been undertaken by the Headteacher by choice rather than by default, although from my own experience, some Headteachers had reluctantly taken on this role and it could have been from such a Headteacher that this worker had gained this perception.

Those respondents (12) not in contact with all the designated teachers, were asked to identify other members of staff at any of the schools that they liaised with. Ten of the 12 respondents identified the class teacher/form tutor, five the Head of Year, two SENCOs and two deputy head Teachers. The Leaving Care Team Connexions Advisor, as well as being in contact with some of the staff members mentioned by the other respondents, also identified a range of different school staff including Equality Service Teachers, learning assistants, Connexions Workers and Admissions Officers. Again the different focus of his work would appear to account for this. The Guidance indicated that the designated teacher would not be expected to undertake all the tasks associated with the education of the pupils looked after in their schools but should have an overview. Clearly this may have been happening in the schools where social workers had contact with other members of staff. In further research, this would need to be investigated with the school staff concerned.

To identify whether there was a pattern to being able to establish collaborative working, in terms of type of school or geographical location, respondents were asked to indicate which schools they had been able to achieve this with. The results are shown in table 6.1, below:

Type of Schools					
	All	Most	Some	Few	None
Schools in Shiretown LEA	3	2	1	1	
		1	2		
		3	1		
Schools outside of Shiretown LEA	3	2	1	3	1
			3		
Primary Schools	4	2	3		
		1			
Secondary Schools		1	2		1
		4	3		
Special Schools - Day	1	3	1		1
	1	1	1		
Special Schools - Residential	2	2	2		
		2			

Colour code:

Leaving Care Team

Disabled Children's Team

Looked After Children's Team

Table 6.1: Social Workers who achieved collaborative working with schools

The designated teachers in Shiretown LEA’s schools had been given the opportunity to attend several training events, including half-day conferences and a series of twilight sessions. For those who had not been able to attend, individual work had been offered to the schools where there were looked after pupils, e.g. INSET delivered by Shiretown’s Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children or Advisory Teachers. It was not known what training had been made available to designated teachers in other local education authorities.

There appeared to be a difference in the success of working collaboratively with schools in terms of their geographical location, with nearly two-thirds of the social workers reporting that this had been achieved with all or most of the schools in Shiretown’s local education authority area. For schools outside the local LEA, five out of 12 respondents had been able to work collaboratively with schools. This simply may have been an accessibility issue but, interestingly, all of the workers who had achieved it were from the Looked After Children’s Team. This could have been due to the length of time that LACT workers held cases, given that the children/young people caseheld in this team usually only passed to another worker when they approached 16 years of age and a Leaving Care Advisor took over the case or if a worker left the team. Alternatively, cases were closed if an

Adoption or Residential Order was completed. However, the better collaborative working could have been due to differences in practice between workers in the different teams. The latter would account for the difference in reported collaborative working by members the Disabled Children's Team, where three workers reported 'some' and three reported 'few' schools had worked collaboratively with them. The social workers in this team would usually have worked with young people until they transferred to the Adult Team at 19 years of age. The Looked After Children's Team focuses solely on children and young people in public care, whilst the focus of the work undertaken by the Disabled Children's Team is around disability issues. Looked after children only account for a small proportion of any DCT social worker's caseload, with most of the young people they work with living with their families. In the latter case, school liaison would normally be dealt with by the families, with social worker intervention being undertaken by request or in the case of difficulty. This difference in focus could account for the possible difference in practice but further work would need to be undertaken to confirm this hypothesis or identify another cause. Also, whilst this might explain the difference in practice, it raises significant issues relating to leadership and management at both team and strategic levels. In terms of the education of looked after children, there should be no choice about collaborative working between agencies, given that its absence was identified as contributing to the poor educational outcomes this client group (DfEE/DoH, 2000). However, social workers have demonstrated that they are not undertaking the necessary actions to implement effective collaboration and there appears to be a team difference within Shiretown's Social Service Departments. Platt (DoH, 1999) commented on –

“Patterns of inconsistent responses ... within social service departments and even within teams ... (1999, 4.11)

This report also highlighted that inspections for disabled children showed a lack of a clear sense of direction, with the service often isolated from mainstream childcare. However, given that Shiretown (in common with other authorities) has a high proportion of disabled children in the looked after cohort, it is essential that

there is adherence to the procedures for improving the educational outcomes for these young people, e.g. implementation of personal educational plans, effective collaboration with schools and other agencies. It is only when every worker, who caseholds a looked after young person, embraces the procedures and practice to improve the education of these young people that Shiretown may both meet the national targets set to achieve this and also fulfil the vision of doing “what any good parent would do” (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 13). Shiretown’s senior management should address the issues of quality assurance raised by this study.

In terms of the type of school, primaries were reported to be those where most collaboration had been achieved, with four of the workers reporting that they had achieved this with ‘all’ of the primaries attended by the children they worked with, three reporting ‘most’ and one ‘some’. In comparison, in secondary schools, less than half of the workers reported that they had achieved collaborative working with ‘most’ schools, nearly half with ‘some’ and one worker reported that they had established with ‘none’. Two-thirds of the workers reported collaborative working with ‘all’ and ‘most’ day special schools and the figure was better for residential schools, with three-quarters of the respondents reporting ‘all’ and ‘most’ and the remaining quarter reporting ‘some’. However, this was surprising in that if the young person was a resident at the school, the statutory reviews would have been held at the establishment, so the expected result should have been all workers reporting achieving this with ‘all’ the residential schools. This could have been due to the interpretation that some workers put on the term ‘collaborative working’. Given that no explanations were requested for any response other than ‘all’, further work would need to be done to ascertain this.

The social workers from the Looked After Children’s Team appeared to have established collaborative working with a greater proportion of the schools attended by the young people they worked with, with only one worker reporting that they had only achieved this with ‘some’ of the Shiretown schools and one reporting ‘none’ of the special day schools. However, it should be remembered that with such small numbers the data is frail. The greater proportion of young people caseheld by the LACT social workers would have attended mainstream schools.

Those caseheld by DCT workers would have been more likely to attend special schools. Therefore, further work would need to be done to ascertain whether this outcome is related to team behaviour or school behaviour, the interaction of them both or other factors.

Workers were also asked to identify any other educational establishments that they had been able to work collaboratively with. In response to this, eight of the workers identified Education Other and two workers identified colleges of Further Education.

In response to the question as to whether all of the young people they worked with had a Personal Education Plan that had been formulated or reviewed within the last six months, under half of the workers from the Disabled Children's Team stated that they did, all of the Leaving Care Team and six out of seven of the Looked After Children's Team respondents reported "Yes". Workers were asked to explain why some of the young people were without a PEP. Responses were:

- Worker not initiated (x2).
- School not responded to social worker's request for a PEP meeting.
- Case just transferred and previous worker had not formulated one.

(Figures in brackets indicate the number of workers who gave this response)

Where Personal Education Plans had been completed, social workers were asked to respond to statements about the process involved in completing the plans. Twelve out of 13 respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that multi-agency involvement at the PEP meetings was the most important aspect of the process. Twelve of the 14 agreed that the process facilitated joint working between those involved in corporate parenting. For both statements, the remaining one and two respondents, respectively, 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. All of the respondents agreed that the process provided good information sharing opportunities and that the targets devised for the PEP highlighted the educational needs of the young people. Ten of the 14 respondents thought that the PEP process helped various agencies to understand their individual roles and responsibilities (four were unsure) but there was less consensus about whether it aided various professionals

in understanding the boundaries and limitations of the other agencies – half ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’; five ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’ and one ‘disagreed’.

Of the 14 respondents, three felt that the PEP process was time-consuming, whilst half disagreed and four were unsure. However, only one respondent did not ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with the statement that “the process adds no value” and that worker was neither in agreement nor disagreement. Similarly, 12 of the 14 respondents felt that the process helped them give effective support to the young person for whom they had responsibility; two ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’.

Respondents were asked to outline any indications they had about the value placed by schools on the Personal Education Plans and/or the process involved in formulating them. Seven of the social workers gave indications that schools valued the PEPs and/or the process, citing that -

- It provided valuable information for all involved to gain a greater understanding of the difficulties experienced by looked after children and, therefore, initiatives to improve outcomes for them.
- Whilst it was initially viewed as “just another form”, school staff appeared to welcome the additional information and different perspectives that the process facilitated.
- High value was placed on the process because it was informative.
- Schools welcomed information on parental responsibility, responsibilities of foster carers, etc.
- School staff appreciated PEPs and co-operated well, acknowledging the importance in supporting vulnerable children and assisting them to fulfil their potential.

- School staff had gained a greater understanding of the non-school issues of looked after young people which may have impacted on their education.
- The process facilitated schools working more closely with foster carers.
- Value placed on setting realistic targets for young people.

Conversely, six of the social workers gave more negative responses to this question –

- Formulating and/or reviewing the Personal Education Plan could be no more than a paper exercise.
- Schools appeared to engage in the process because it was expected of them, not because they placed any value on the process or the document.
- Some schools appeared to be unsure of what to expect from Personal Education Plans and did not seem to be aware of their joint responsibilities in contributing to them.
- If there were no “high” concerns over a young person’s education, some schools indicated that PEPs were unnecessary and appeared to resent the time taken to formulate them.
- Some school staff had indicated that they felt the PEP was a replication of known information.
- Whilst schools could value PEPs for young people in foster care, it was seen as an intrusion if they were in an adoptive placement.

These statements were made without qualification; therefore, no examples were given to illustrate the comments. Interestingly, some schools appeared to be engaging in the process of formulating/reviewing Personal Education Plans whilst being unsure of their role and/or not valuing the process or the document. It would be interesting to undertake some further research with these participants to investigate whether the imposed activity led to an eventual change in attitude.

Where there were perceptions that the Personal Education Plan duplicated information or was unnecessary, this could be because the PEP was poorly constructed or a good information sharing, collaborative relationship existed independently of the process. If it was the latter, should there have been an insistence that a PEP was formulated for every looked after pupil? Local education authority and school Ofsted inspections would indicate that this was necessary in terms of targets, rather than in the interest of the individual pupil.

The social workers surveyed were also asked to give their perceptions of whether the schools they worked with were fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities to looked after children. Again the views differed, but the majority view (10) was that schools did not fulfil this responsibility, as evidenced by the following comments –

1. Both Education Departments and schools were not fulfilling their responsibilities to unaccompanied asylum seeking young people who arrived in the country in Year 11, as there was a reluctance to admit them to schools.
2. Some schools were unwilling to work in partnership or provide basic information to social workers, e.g. attendance rates and general progress.
3. They were more likely to engage in collaborative work when the young person was experiencing/causing difficulties (x2).
4. School staff did not appear to have any understanding of their corporate parenting responsibilities. Corporate parenting was seen as a role for Social Service Departments (x3).
5. ‘School staff’ did not understand the additional needs that looked after children may have (x2).
6. In attempting not to stigmatise looked after children, some schools did not meet the young people’s additional needs.

(Figures in brackets indicate the number of workers who gave this response)

Again these negative comments were not qualified. All of these statements indicate practice that is contrary to the various government initiatives that address the needs of young people in public care and/or pupils with special educational needs. For the comment on admission of unaccompanied asylum seekers (1), the DfES (2004b) was aware that –

“While some schools are fully committed to including children who have SEN, others are still not playing their part fully ...”
(DfES, 2004b, p.41)

This document also comments that admission policies can act unfavourably on looked after children because a school placement may be required mid-year or even mid-term. The DfES research on admissions and exclusions also found evidence that -

“...less favourable treatment was possible with the casual admission of pupils with SEN but no statement” (DfES, 2005a, p. 100)

For unaccompanied asylum seekers, whilst English as a second language is not an identified special educational need, undoubtedly there are real problems in meeting their educational needs (Reakes and Powell, 2004). These young people are also classified as being in public care. DfES (2005a) have stated that

“... unaccompanied asylum seeker children have the same rights to education as other children.” (p.1)

The reluctance on information sharing (2) was contra to the school’s obligations to report to parents. This may have been a misunderstanding about the role of the social worker, in terms of parental responsibility and would appear to indicate a training need. In fact, the whole concept of corporate parenting would appear to have been an area that needed clarification for some schools.

This section summarises other comments about the corporate parenting responsibilities of schools. There was recognition by some of the respondents that

the occurrence of schools fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities was variable and factors that could prevent this from happening effectively were staff and time constraints, geographical location and type of school. In terms of location, one respondent felt that if a school was at some distance from Shiretown, she was unlikely to have the desired level of contact with that school and this could militate against the school undertaking the corporate parenting role effectively. Two respondents mentioned type of school as a factor in effective corporate parenting. One felt that primary schools fulfilled the role, partly because they were smaller than secondaries and the Headteacher was usually the designated teacher. If, in the latter role, the Headteacher had gained some insight into the difficulties experienced by looked after children, s/he could influence the whole staff group in their approach to looked after young people. Again, this appeared to be what the Guidance indicated by a person in authority, “who can make things happen” (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 32).

Three respondents reported that ‘some schools’ were good at liaising with social workers and providing regular information, outside of the PEP process, on progress, attendance, behaviour, etc. Concerns about a young person were expressed at an early stage to attempt to divert a crisis. No information was recorded about who their point of contact was in these situations. One respondent felt that the corporate parenting role, whilst being a challenge for some mainstream schools, was not so different for special schools, which appeared to be more open to protecting/promoting the well-being of vulnerable children. Whilst there appeared to be some examples of schools effectively fulfilling the corporate parenting role for looked after children, it appeared not to be the majority of schools worked with by the respondents. Maybe not surprisingly, all but one of the respondents either ‘strongly agreed’ (8) or ‘agreed’ (3) with the statement that “to effect an improvement to the education of looked after children, designated teachers need to be more involved with social work teams”. Similarly, all but one either ‘strongly agreed’ (5) or ‘agreed’ (4) with the statement that “regular contact should be maintained between designated teachers and social workers, rather than

just in response to problems”. For both statements, the respondents who did not agree, were unsure.

The Guidance stated that designated teachers should ‘champion’ the looked after young people in their schools (DfEE/DoH 2000, p.32). Social workers were asked whether in their dealings with designated teachers, they felt they fulfilled this. Responses varied, with three respondents stating that ‘most’ did, six that ‘some’ did, one that ‘few’ did and one that ‘none’ did.

The social workers were asked to indicate changes in processes or practices that they thought would make a positive difference to the educational experiences of the young people in the care of Shiretown Borough Council. The following section summarises the responses –

1. All those involved in corporate parenting needed to be more actively involved in sustaining educational placements. Social workers to visit schools and teachers to be party to statutory reviews.
2. Achievement needed to be celebrated.
3. Regular liaison about problems/progress to facilitate earlier intervention if difficulties arose.
4. Social workers and teachers to listen to young people and take appropriate actions.
5. Revision of admission procedures to avoid unnecessary and long delays
6. School staff to be more aware of the role of designated teacher for pupils in public care.
7. Social workers to have the names of designated teachers in the schools they work with.
8. Better resourced and more flexible teaching services for young people who were not in school.

9. Policy that school placements not to be changed due to cost of transport.
10. Extra tutoring and mentoring should be available to looked after young people.

Reviewing the recommendations for improvement, it should be noted that the authority's policies on the Education of Looked After Children endorse items 1-6 for Shiretown social workers, carers and schools. It may be that the policy has not become practice but, also, it should be remembered that more than half of Shiretown's statutory school age cohort of looked after children attend schools in other LEAs.

In terms of social workers being more involved in schools (1), that was a time-management issue for them. The practice of teachers not being included in young people's statutory reviews (1) had been adopted in Shiretown as a result of the Service Manager responsible for those activities having the belief that young people did not want teachers in their homes, as it stigmatized them. With a change of personnel, there was the belief that including teachers was vital to improving educational experiences and outcomes for looked after young people and this practice was being introduced for Shiretown's cohort.

With regard to item 5, whilst admission procedures had been revised to favour looked after young people and regulations already existed concerning schools having to accept a pupil if they had a place, some schools had demonstrated a very real reluctance to offer places to a young person in public care. On several occasions, local education authority admissions officers had to become involved to prevent unnecessary delays. However, workers are reluctant to resort to this, as they fear that the young person might be disadvantaged, by the school staff, if the placement is enforced.

The celebration of achievement can be done on a small scale, with individual pupils, by schools, carers and workers or as a larger scale prize-giving ceremony for all the young people in Shiretown's public care. Coincidentally, Shiretown's

second of these Celebration of Achievement ceremonies was due to occur at the end of the following school term but, at the time of the survey, this information had not been conveyed to social workers.

To facilitate items 3, 4 and 6, better multi-agency working was essential and, for schools in the Shiretown local education authority area, it had been recognized that joint training opportunities needed to be increased to encourage this. This also concurred with the formation of a single Children's Department, to include both Social Services and Education Departments and the recognition that training would be an essential part of the change management.

A worker requesting the names of designated teachers was somewhat surprising, in that there was available a list of all the designated teachers in Shiretown's schools. More difficult was obtaining and updating that information from schools outside of the local education authority, given that 57 schools were attended by pupils in public care of Shiretown outside of its own LEA, compared to 29 schools within the LEA. Given that workers may have been involved in accessing an educational placement for the young person, and initiating and formulating the Personal Education Plan, it could be assumed that they could have obtained the names of designated teachers in the schools attended by the young people that they worked with. This issue would need to be addressed with Team Managers/individual workers.

Items 8, 9 and 10 clearly have financial implications. Shiretown's Education Other, for pupils not in school, offers the flexible service that one respondent mentioned. However, it has not been possible to access routinely such services in other local education authorities, where either the provision does not exist or the young people are unable to access it because of regulations about admission, e.g. for permanently excluded pupils.

The extra tutoring and mentoring cited by one respondent afforded the opportunity for pupils to 'catch-up' work they may have missed (SEU, 2003). This had been available for a small number of pupils in the public care of Shiretown. It had been possible to recruit a teacher to fulfil this role using the funding available to 'pump

prime' for Public Service Agreement stretch targets around the education of looked after children. Given that the targets were for educational achievement in the academic years ending summer 2005 and 2006 and attendance in the year ending 2005, the tuition was for the pupils undertaking GCSE examinations in those years. The worker who suggested it for all looked after children, caseheld a young person who had been receiving tuition.

Comparison with 2002 surveys

In 2004, all of the designated teachers interviewed indicated their understanding of the difficulties experienced by children in public care, compared to a third of the group in 2002.

In the 2002 interviews, the majority of the designated teachers expressed the desire to work collaboratively, recognising the value of sharing information and the need to have a framework to undertake this effectively. In 2004, the consensus amongst the designated teachers was that communication between schools and Shiretown's Social Services Department had improved, both by the introduction of the post of designated teacher as a contact point in schools and with the post of Teacher/Advisor as a contact point in Social Services. There were still some inconsistencies in regular, effective communication between the two agencies, other than through these postholders. This could account for the variations in the perceptions of the social workers in terms of effective communication, given that there were different practices in terms of who in the school they liaised with.

From the initial questionnaire undertaken in 2002, half of the social work respondents felt that it was difficult to liaise with some schools. Although there was little evidence of effective liaison, only one social worker commented that some schools were hard to engage and another talked about letters and telephone messages not being responded to. In 2002 there was unanimous agreement from the social workers that 'joined up' working practices could result in improvement in young people's educational experiences and all but one of the workers thought that there should be greater levels of collaboration. In 2004, it was disappointing,

therefore, that four social workers reported that their only contact with the designated teachers was to formulate and/or review PEPs.

From the viewpoint of the designated teachers, during the study period, there had been an increase in the number of examples of good collaborative working to achieve a positive outcome for a looked after young person. Whilst there had been some positive examples in 2002, these were matched by examples of poor or non-collaboration, which resulted in negative educational outcomes for young people. In 2004, interviewees cited two examples but both of these involved children placed in their schools by other local authorities. Only Special L is a non-Shiretown LEA school and this school's designated teacher had no negative examples involving Shiretown looked after children. However, more designated teachers in schools outside the borough, attended by Shiretown looked after pupils, would need to be surveyed to ascertain whether there was a difference in their perceptions to the collaborative working practices of Shiretown's social workers/carers.

In 2002, in exploring the role of designated teacher for young people in public care, just less than half of the social work respondents agreed that all the schools they dealt with had designated teachers. Nearly three years on, whilst social workers were aware of the role of designated teacher, only a fifth of the respondents had contact with these postholders in all of the schools they worked with. In the initial survey only one respondent felt that most designated teachers were committed to 'champion' the looked after children in their school. Whilst the response in 2004 was varied, only one social worker felt that none of the designated teachers she worked with fulfilled this requirement. Whilst not using the term "champion", designated teachers identified their role within the school as unique in that it provided "an overview" (ZL, 2004), a "fast track" (SB, 2004), "a point of contact" (JA, 2004) for the education of looked after children. In terms of joined-up working, all of the designated teachers felt that there had been some improvement in understanding other professionals' roles during the study period but highlighted joint training as a tool for further improvement. In 2004, the barriers to collaborative working were identified by the designated teachers as

being very much within the schools, with the exception of good communication with Social Services.

In 2002, the majority of the social workers (13 of the 15) questioned believed that Personal Education Plans were important in terms of attempting to improve the educational experience of young people. Although the belief in value did not appear to have changed, it was surprising that there were still a significant number of young people without one. From my own experience, special schools sometimes believed that the Individual Education Plans that they formulated for each of their pupils provided the information and targets that Personal Education Plans required. This could be overcome by an explanation of the difference but it may have been that social workers were not confident in providing this. Noticeably, it was the Disabled Children's Team workers who had a surprisingly large number of young people without PEPs and most of their client group would attend special schools. This possible explanation would need further investigation.

Discussion of findings in relation to questions, literature, methodology

The section about types and geographical locations of schools as contributing or inhibiting factors to effective multi-agency co-operation/collaboration aligns directly with research question 1.

Research question 2 examines the role of designated teachers within the sample schools, in terms of facilitating schools engaging in corporate parenting. The views of the social workers on the role and effectiveness of designated teachers provided valuable information on a range of schools that the sample schools could be compared and contrasted with.

Research question 3 attempts to identify solutions that were effective in overcoming the factors that accounted for/contributed to the under-achievement in the education of looked after children. The survey of social workers gave data on their interactions with schools attended by their clients. Positive examples of good collaboration obviously indicate solutions but, where workers were more negative, this data can give some insight into what solutions were necessary. Also from the

analysis of the data, differences in working practices could be identified that could account for poor collaboration, e.g. failing to initiate a Personal Education Plan meeting, social workers not regularly liaising with schools. One of the respondents suggested that schools seemed unaware of the corporate parenting role and believed that it was the responsibility of Social Services. From the questionnaire responses, there were some indications that social workers were not aware of their role in terms of the education of looked after young people and regarded it as the responsibility of the schools. Examples to evidence this supposition are:

- ❖ Worker delegating to carer all contact with school;
- ❖ Workers not initiating Personal Education Plan meetings;
- ❖ Worker stating that they had not changed practice as a result of the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care.

Research question 4 attempts to identify how the designated teachers, in the sample schools, could address the needs of looked after children to improve their educational experience. The views of the social workers clearly gave indications of their perceptions of designated teachers who had facilitated this in schools they worked with, e.g. Head Teacher undertaking this role being able to positively influence the whole staff group. This information also informed research question 5, which examines the characteristics of designated teachers who effectively facilitated multi-agency collaboration.

The literature on multi-agency working also related to the interviews, particularly in relation to –

- a) Consideration of factors that inhibit or militate against ‘joined up’ working (DfEE/DoH, 2000)
- b) Need for committed individuals (Atkinson and Kinder, 2000)
- c) Wish to be involved in multi-agency collaboration, rather than being directed to engage (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002)

It was disappointing that the social workers' perceptions did not confirm that designated teachers had undertaken the 'championing' role that the Guidance advocated to improve the educational outcomes of young people in Public Care (DFEE/DoH, 2000) and Atkinson and Kinder (2000) identified for successful multi-agency working.

From the analysis of the data derived from the questionnaire for social workers, I believe that it resulted in some valuable and interesting information in respect of the perceptions of designated teachers, both in identifying the occurrence of co-operation between all the agencies involved in corporate parenting, the role of the designated teacher in facilitating this and their own professional social work practice.

The questionnaire provided an instrument that was beneficial in gathering the data required in that, although for a questionnaire survey, a relatively small number of respondents were involved, because of time constraints, it allowed a far greater number than would have been possible with semi-structured interviews. The anonymity of the questionnaire allowed respondents to give more open and honest answers, given that the comments were not attributable to them. My position as Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children may have influenced the social workers' responses if semi-structured interviews had been undertaken.

The smaller number of designated teachers in the sample schools afforded the opportunity to undertake semi-structured interviews. I believe that the data derived from these interviews gave a valuable insight into the designated teachers' perceptions of the value of their role, the improvements in corporate parenting achieved as a result of the introduction of the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DoH, 2000) and the barriers to making an improvement to the educational outcomes for looked after young people.

The next chapter reflects on all the data and outlines some of the conclusions arising from this research study and makes recommendations for future working and areas of further research.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study is located in the area of inclusion. It has examined the concept of ‘corporate parenting’ and its effectiveness in improving the educational achievement of young people in the public care of Shiretown Borough Council. This was examined from the contribution to the process of the designated teachers in a sample of five schools. The Government had introduced the role of designated teacher of young people in public care (DfEE/DoH, 2000) to facilitate schools being involved in multi-agency collaboration to improve the educational outcomes for this vulnerable group of pupils.

The Government set local authorities targets to improve the educational outcomes of looked after pupils. The measures were quantitative and measured the achievement outcomes and attendance rates. Whilst, in terms of research, percentages of such small numbers are inappropriate, this was the format that the Government required for reporting achievement. Overall, the data for the period of the study present a dismal picture of the educational achievements of Shiretown’s looked after young people (as reported in Appendix 13). However, it should be noted that, of the very small cohorts, significant proportions were young people with special educational needs, for whom the GCSE ‘yardstick’ was not the appropriate measurement of their achievement. The figures relating to this are shown below in Table 7.1:

	2001	2002	2003	2004
KS 1	-	-	-	1/10 disapplied
KS 2	4/8 disapplied	2/7 disapplied	2/4 disapplied	1/6 disapplied
KS 3	5/11 disapplied	5/13 disapplied	6/10 disapplied	1/6 disapplied
GCSE	3/8 SLD*	3/8 SLD*	2/15 MLD**	7/14 MLD/SLD

Table 7.1 Young people who did not undertake GCSE/SATs because of Special Needs (figure shown as a fraction of total cohort) **[*SLD – Severe Learning Difficulties; **MLD – Moderate Learning Difficulties]**

In addition, some young people were in specialist provision that limited their access to nationally accredited qualifications, (e.g. therapeutic communities, schools for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties). For the SATs tests such pupils, together with those with statements for SEN, are shown as disapplied. The provision appeared to be that appropriate to meet their educational/behavioural needs, but further research would need to be done to ascertain whether their educational needs, in terms of gaining accreditations and the life chances associated with these, outweighed this consideration.

The case studies in this thesis offer a predominantly qualitative approach to the subject of the contribution of designated teachers to corporate parenting of Shiretown's population of young people in public care.

To formulate some conclusions on this research study, it is necessary to summarise the data and develop conclusions under each of the research questions.

1. *What were the factors in the schools in the sample that contributed to or inhibited effective multi-agency co-operation to improve the educational experience of Shiretown's population of young people in care?*

The literature highlights some of the pre-requisites for achieving multi-agency collaboration/co-operation, in terms of having someone providing a link between the agencies (DfEE/DoH, 2000), the inclusion of committed individuals or 'champions' and the development of a shared understanding (see, for example, Clark, 1993; Coulling, 2000). The Government's expectation was that the designated teacher for pupils in public care would provide the 'link'/ 'champion' to facilitate collaboration from the school's perspective. There was anticipation that the process of corporate parenting, together with joint training, would facilitate a shared understanding of both the problem and the solution. However, even when attitudes and commitment were in place, there was recognition that there could still be practical issues around communication (Atkinson and Kinder, 1999) and establishing procedures (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002) and getting people together (Wilson and Pirrie, 2000).

At the beginning of the research period, five of the six designated teachers interviewed expressed a desire to work collaboratively. Given that attitudes, shared understandings and commitment to the process were identified as factors that contributed to multi-agency working (Atkinson *et al.*, 2002), one of the designated teachers indicated at the initial interview that he did not recognise any need to change his practice. It is possible to interpret this as him being directed to engage in the role of designated teacher, rather than wishing to be involved, which Atkinson *et al.* (2002) viewed as an inhibitor to effective multi-agency working. Another of the designated teachers, although not one of the five in the sample schools, indicated that she did not have a shared understanding by the comment about the role of the designated teacher and the implementation of PEPs as treating looked after pupils as “normal with abnormal bits tacked on”. From this comment, it would appear that she did not view this as an initiative within the equal opportunities/inclusion arena.

In the initial interviews, from both positive and negative experiences of collaboration with social workers, the majority of the designated teachers felt that it was necessary to establish a framework for information sharing and communication. Harker *et al.* (2004a) stated that -

“... commitment [to inter-agency working] is rendered meaningless if additional supportive structures are absent.
(Harker *et al.*, 2004a, p. 191)

These interviews also flagged up that designated teachers did not have a clear understanding of other professionals’ roles and responsibilities. Wilson and Pirrie (2000) had specified the importance of this to achieve effective multi-agency working. This also impacted on the establishment of effective communication because of different working patterns. The difficulty of effective communication was two-fold, in that without being able to establish it the designated teacher could not make an effective contribution to the corporate parenting process. However, the role of the designated teacher was implemented to overcome this difficulty but, because communication is, at least, a two-way process, the other

parties needed to facilitate easily accessed pathways. The evidence from this study was that this was not always happening. For example, two of the young people (Lennie and Jack) were critical of their social workers not responding to contact from their schools. At the final interviews, the designated teachers gave some examples of lack of response from social workers, although this was mostly concerned with local authorities at a distance from Shiretown. At the initial interviews, designated teachers raised cross-boundary issues as a factor that could inhibit multi-agency collaboration, both because of different local authority procedures and because the distance could militate against regular communication. The end of study survey of social workers also indicated lower levels of collaboration with schools some distance from Shiretown.

Fletcher-Campbell *et al.* (2004) identified the need for designated teachers to have the time as well as the commitment to fulfil the responsibilities of the role. In the initial interviews, some of the designated teachers identified lack of time as a barrier to effective collaboration. This was evidenced by the incident of “PEPs – Not”, where it appeared that the perceived magnitude of effectively undertaking the task had prevented collaboration, although the designated teacher was committed to the process.

Initially, the prescriptive curricula at Key Stages 4 and 5 were identified by two of the designated teachers as a factor militating against the performance/development of some looked after pupils. The number of looked after pupils who were being educated in Education Other would appear to support this, in that this establishment had the flexibility in provision of education packages that the schools lacked (see, for example, Dan – pp. 107-109), although opportunities were increasing for schools to access some of these. From the school’s perspective the designated teachers expressed some concern that school league tables militated against inclusion and would, therefore, impact unfavourably on the school’s ability to provide the support necessary to improve the educational achievement of looked after pupils. For schools, the pupils for whom the traditional Key Stage 4 curriculum was not appropriate, were those who would have a detrimental effect on their ‘league table position’. Whilst this was

mentioned by two of the designated teachers at the initial interviews, it was not supported at end of study interviews, when the inclusion agenda appeared to have been embraced. This was in concert with the high-profile Government agenda for inclusion in mainstream schools for all but those young people with the most complex and profound special educational needs. Therefore, this could account for this change in perception. The designated teacher for Education Other still believed that mainstream schools were mindful of their position in the league tables but believed that the schools were –

“... not firstly and overwhelmingly dedicated to league tables but they [were] a victim of them.” (ZL, 2004)

The factors in the schools that facilitated multi-agency working were identified by the designated teachers as the implementation of their role, in that it provided a contact point, fast track and channel for communication and facilitated someone having an overview. At the end of the study interviews, two of the designated teachers felt that their role had improved communication with social workers. The other two felt that, whilst there had been some improvement, there were still considerable difficulties. It may be pertinent that these two were designated teachers who delegated most of the tasks to other school staff.

“Ensuring effective working relationships, within and between agencies, involves ... establishing and maintaining regular communication.” (Harker *et al.*, 2004a, p. 186)

The school having a good pastoral system and an ethos of inclusion were highlighted by the designated teachers as being factors that facilitated and promoted multi-agency working. This was reinforced by one of the social workers who commented that the corporate parenting role presented less of a challenge to schools that were open to protecting/promoting the well-being of vulnerable children.

The study did evidence examples of good collaboration (see case studies re. Trudy, Zena, Wendy, Ian, Dan, Kristian – Chapter 5). Where this occurred, it

would appear that the pre-requisites for multi-agency working were achieved, *i.e.* good information sharing that facilitated shared understanding and goals, good communication and an understanding of others' roles and responsibilities. All of the designated teachers agreed that, during the study period, there had been some improvement in teachers' and social workers' understanding of each other's jobs.

Both designated teachers and social workers expressed concern about levels and frequency of contact/communication, in that for the majority it was either to implement or review a PEP or in response to a crisis. Vernon and Sinclair (1998) stated that -

“ ... a commitment to grasping and exploiting all opportunities for a collaborative approach is crucial to the development of collaboration.” (p.2)

2. *Within the sample schools, did the designated teachers of pupils in public care facilitate schools engaging in the process of collaborative working?*

The role of the designated teacher was introduced by the publication of The Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DoH, 2000). The Guidance stated that the designated teacher—

“... should be an advocate for young people in public care, accessing services and support and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations for them.” (p.32)

However, there was recognition that the young people may choose to trust talking to a member of school staff other than the designated teacher. The Guidance suggested that this flexible approach was –

“ ... the most effective, as long as the designated teacher is available to ensure that support is properly co-ordinated.”
(p.33)

The designated teachers in the sample schools had both differing perceptions and practices on how they undertook the role. This aligned with the literature,

reporting on the role of the designated teacher. The SEU report (2002) highlighted that the role could contribute to teachers not undertaking any responsibility to look after pupils, seeing this group as the preserve of the designated teacher. In contrast to this, Fletcher-Campbell *et al.* (2004) identified that many designated teachers regarded themselves as a facilitator within a support team. This research also found that there was wide variation in whether designated teachers undertook or delegated all the tasks associated with looking after pupils.

In the initial interviews, the two secondary school designated teachers stated their intention of delegating tasks to others, whilst retaining an overview. In practice, in Mainstream C, the designated teacher was completely involved in PEP completion and other meetings which arose as a result of the target-setting process embedded in PEPs (e.g. improving George's attendance rate) but remained very removed from the process identifying that Lennie was inappropriately placed at the school, even suggesting that he should be permanently excluded to ensure that the LEA and Social Services identified an alternative provision. It appeared that because he was on the autistic disorder spectrum (ASD), this was identified as the main issue and his looked after status was overlooked. This supposition would explain Shiretown's Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children, not being informed of the difficulty until quite late in the process. In terms of the management of young people with ASD, further research and case study would need to be undertaken to ascertain whether the changes, to his care arrangements, were the main cause of Lennie's difficulties, manifested in behavioural terms in the educational setting.

At Mainstream A School, the designated teacher, whilst retaining an involvement in all of the incidents involving looked after pupils, delegated tasks to others, e.g. Heads of Year, form teachers, etc. He remained the conduit or link for social workers and carers throughout the processes. This resulted in good and accessible communication between all the agencies. To facilitate this, the designated teacher communicated, both regularly and in response to difficulties, with the

Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children, who liaised with the appropriate workers in Social Services.

At Special L School, the designated teacher undertook several tasks associated with the role but delegated those that were more appropriately undertaken by others, whilst still retaining a watching brief. An example of this was the transfer of Trudy to mainstream school, which necessitated the involvement of the inclusion teacher. Again, because of her involvement, there was good communication between all agencies. The situation was the same at Education Other, with the majority of tasks being delegated and a good communication system, facilitated by the designated teacher.

At Special B, the tasks associated with the role were neither undertaken by the designated teacher nor delegated to others. There was no recognition of the difficulties experienced by looked after pupils. This could be because the school catered for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, looked after pupils displayed very little, if any, difference to the rest of the pupil population of the school, in terms of behaviour or achievement. Without the recognition of their additional difficulties, there was no commitment to collaborative working with other agencies. In effect, it appeared that rather than facilitate collaborative working, the designated teacher/Head of Special B prevented it.

In summary, in three of the sample schools the designated teacher facilitated their schools engaging in multi-agency collaboration to improve the educational experiences of Shiretown's population of young people in public care. In a fourth (Mainstream C School), whilst there appeared to be a commitment to the role, the designated teacher was not consistent in facilitating the school to work co-operatively with other agencies. There was some recognition from her that some of the school's staff did not "take .. on board" the difficulties of looked after pupils (CH, 2004).

This was the position in just five of the schools where some of Shiretown's looked after pupils attended. The social workers surveyed gave some indication of their perceptions on the role of designated teachers in all the schools attended by the

young people they worked with. The situation indicated by the respondents was very different, with the majority ($^{11}/_{15}$) not having contact with all of the designated teachers in the schools liaised with. However, given that they had contact with other members of the school staff, it is not clear whether the designated teachers had an overview, facilitated the contact, or were not involved. Future research would need to ascertain this. The other variable in this was the geographical location of the school, in terms of its proximity to Shiretown, with less collaboration occurring at greater distances. Given that the sample schools were in, or extremely close to, Shiretown, the apparent difference in the role of designated teacher in these schools, in terms of facilitating the schools engaging in collaborative working could be due to this.

3. *Given that factors had been identified that accounted for/contributed to the under-achievement in education of looked after children, what solutions were effective in overcoming these within the sample schools?*

The factors that accounted for/contributed to the under-achievement in education of looked after children have been well documented. In the report on “Raising the educational attainment of children in care”, Bhabra *et al.* (2002) identified the following aspects of school that had the greatest influence –

- i. Ethos of inclusion.
- ii. High expectations of the children together with knowledge and understanding of the issues faced by children in care.
- iii. Continuity of school placement and ‘stable’ staffing.
- iv. A balance between understanding the needs of the young people in care and not making them feel ‘different’.

All four of the designated teachers interviewed at the end of the study believed that their schools had an inclusive ethos, where children were cared for. Four of the five designated teachers in the overall sample had an understanding of the distinct difficulties of looked after young people in general and most of them had a good understanding of the issues that individual young people had faced.

Where there was good information sharing, this facilitated a greater understanding and a greater willingness to improve the educational experience of these young people. All of the four designated teachers displayed a sensitivity to not making the young people feel 'different'.

In terms of continuity of school placements, the designated teacher at Mainstream A. School demonstrated her commitment to this for Ian, in that she was opposed to him having a change of school at the end of Year 9. This had been suggested by his carers as a solution to his poor behaviour in school. The designated teacher was committed to effecting an improvement in his behaviour to enable him to complete his education at the school. Similarly, she undertook extensive work with Wendy to effect an improvement in behaviour. Both young people appeared to respond to these high expectations in terms of their behaviour. For Wendy this impacted positively on her attainment. For Trudy (at Special L), although the designated teacher's intervention resulted in a change of school, it was so carefully planned and executed, to occur at a normal transition stage, that it was a very positive experience for her. Again the high expectations of those involved, including the designated teachers from Special L and Mainstream A Schools, undoubtedly contributed to Trudy making a very successful transition from special to mainstream school. These examples would seem to confirm Elliott's (2002) work on teacher expectations, re. self-fulfilling prophecy theory.

For some other young people, the change of school placement was in response to their needs and appeared to be positive (e.g. Lennie, Zena). Therefore, it would seem, that whilst stability is important, it should not be maintained at the expense of the young person's happiness, as both of these young people were displaying behaviour that appeared to be a result of their discomfort and unhappiness. Linda's permanent exclusion resulted in a similar move and seems to highlight the need to find the appropriate provision for each young person. The literature on alternative curricula at Key Stage 4 indicates that some looked after young people may benefit from this flexibility (see, for example, Fletcher-Campbell, 1997; DfES, 2002; Cullen *et al.*, 2004a).

The literature identified that lack of a shared goal, lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of those involved in corporate parenting and lack of collaborative working were major causes of the under-achievement in education of looked after children (see, for example, SSI/Ofsted, 1995; Fletcher-Campbell, 1997; Jackson, 2001). Effective collaborative working will ensure the formation of shared goals and understandings. Therefore, it would appear that the facilitation of this is the single most effective solution in overcoming the identified factors. The role of designated teacher provides part of the collaboration structure that Vernon and Sinclair (1998) reported gave opportunities for interaction resulting in an increased understanding and appreciation of other professionals' roles.

4. How could designated teachers, in the sample schools, address the needs of looked after children to improve their educational experience?

The Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfES 2000) established the post of designated teacher of looked after children. The expectations of a postholder was that the person –

- 1) would have an understanding about care and the impact of care upon education;
- 2) would be in a position with sufficient authority to influence school policy and practice;
- 3) would be an advocate for young people in public care accessing services and support;
- 4) would ensure that the school shares and supports high expectations for them;
- 5) would ensure speedy transfer of educational information between agencies and individuals;
- 6) would ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan and that the Home-School Agreement is drawn up with the primary carer;

- 7) may have a wider remit for all children receiving assistance from social services, which would make it less likely that young people would feel singled out, and
- 8) may delegate work to other members of the school staff but be available to ensure that support is properly co-ordinated.

Clearly, these were the expectations that the DfES had of the post of designated teacher to improve the educational experience of looked after children. Where there was evidence of the designated teachers in the sample schools fulfilling this brief, it was evident that the school engaged in the collaborative process necessary to undertake the tasks associated with corporate parenting. Table 7.2 below summarises the extent to which the case studies in the research indicate that the designated teachers in the sample schools met the Government's brief for the role:

Table 7.2 Evidence that designated teachers in sample schools met the Government's brief for the role as outlined in DfEE/DoH Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (DfEE/DoH, 2000)

School	Understanding about care	Influence policy and practice	Advocacy	High expectations	Transfer of information	Personal Education Plan/ Home-School Agreement	Wider remit	Delegation/overview
Mainstream A	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
Mainstream C	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Always	Always	Sometimes
Special L	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always
Special B	Never	Always	Never	Sometimes	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never
Education Other	Always	Always	Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Always	Always

The case studies indicated that where the role of the designated teacher indicated an improvement to the educational experience of an individual looked after child/young person, most of the Government's suggested requisites for the post had been fulfilled. The tabulation would indicate that the designated teachers at

Mainstream A and Special L had provided the most positive outcomes for their looked after pupils. Education Other was close, almost on a par with them, with the postholder at Mainstream C having a less positive effect. The designated teacher at Special B appeared to have not had any positive effect on the education of the looked after pupils in that school. These statements are tabulated below (Table 7.3):

Table 7.3 Impact of designated teacher role in case studies

School	Positive Effect	No recognisable effect	Negative effect
Mainstream A	Wendy Ian Trudy*		
Mainstream C	Zena*	George* Lennie	
Special L	Trudy* Kristian		
Special B			Mark Colin
Education Other	Zena* Dan	George*	

Therefore, it would appear that if the recommendations/requisites for the post of designated teacher for young people in public care (DfES, 2000) were met, the looked after pupils in their schools were likely to benefit from an improvement in their educational experience, by virtue of the multi-agency collaboration that the postholder facilitated. All of the designated teachers in the sample schools were in a position of authority to “make things happen” (DfEE/DoH, 2000 p. 31) – two Headteachers (Education Other and Special B School), one Associate Headteacher (Special L School) and two deputy heads (Mainstream A and C Schools). Therefore, it would appear that there must be other factors that accounted for the variation in the success of their facilitation of multi-agency co-operation/collaboration. This will be explored in considering question 5.

5. *What were the characteristics of designated teachers, in the sample schools, who facilitated effective multi-agency co-operation/collaboration, in terms of training, experience and position?*

As previously stated, all of the designated teachers in the sample schools were part of their school's senior management teams. This should have facilitated them having the ability to influence both school policy and the practice of the teachers in their individual schools. All of them had considerable experience of teaching and all had pastoral responsibilities, which gave them the "wider remit for all children receiving assistance from social services" (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 31) that the Guidance recommended, to avoid looked after pupils feeling singled out. Therefore, their experience and position were commensurate with them being able to undertake effectively the role of designated teacher in their individual establishments. However, the research indicates that there was considerable variation in their execution of the role, in terms of the outcomes for the looked after pupils in their schools. What other factors impacted on the role, in terms of its effectiveness in improving the educational experience of the looked after pupils in their schools?

Given that schools are autonomous in their organisation, whilst both deputy heads (in Mainstream A and C Schools) had pastoral responsibilities, their teaching commitments were very different with the designated teacher in Mainstream C having a much larger teaching timetable than her counterpart in Mainstream A. The literature indicates that time to fulfil the role of designated teacher was variable in schools. The SEU (2002) reported that where designated teachers were not given non-contact time to undertake the role, effective liaison with other agencies was more difficult to establish.

The factors of authority and time would appear to align with the DfES expectations for the postholders [items 2), 5) and 8) – see pages 180-181]. Obviously the point made by the postholder in Mainstream C about the number of looked after pupils in the school is also pertinent, as is the delegation of tasks. However, one might presume that the number of looked after pupils in a school ceases to be of such importance if all of the teachers have an understanding about care and its impact on education and are aware of the school's policies and strategies to improve the educational experience of looked after pupils. The Government's expectation was that designated teachers would attend training on

these topics. Shiretown Borough Council had presented both half-day seminars and twilight training sessions on these topics. The neighbouring local authority where Special L School was located had similarly offered a variety of training events. Of the five designated teachers, three had accessed some of this training (Mainstream A and C and Special L Schools). The designated teacher of Education Other had delegated this to the teachers in charge of the three pupil referral units he managed. In addition, he arranged for discrete training on the topic to be presented to the whole staff group of Education Other. The Headteacher of Special B School did not attend any of the training offered nor send a member of staff from the school. As well as training providing the knowledge for the designated teacher to disseminate to the whole school staff, at the initial interviews, it was recognised by all of the designated teachers as being effective in facilitating multi-agency working. Work in three English local authorities to promote effective inter-agency collaboration around the education of looked after children, found that

“... joint training activities were highly valued by personnel
... as a means of crossing boundaries and developing trust
between staff.” (Dyson *et al.*, 1998, p. 5)

Not only are there these practical benefits from attending joint training but committing the time to undertake this could also been viewed as a measure of acknowledging that this group of vulnerable pupils have additional difficulties that impact on their education and of the individual’s commitment to the role of designated teacher. Without this, it would appear unlikely that the designated teacher would be in a position to undertake the advocacy role that the Guidance recommended. Similarly, without an understanding of the problems and difficulties experienced by looked after children and the impact of this on education, it could be difficult to have and promote the high expectations that have been identified as necessary to improve their educational achievements, as a means of improving their life chances.

Conclusion

“Whilst it seems intuitively plausible to consider that more effective joint working and active promotion of the need to support looked after children’s education are likely to result in improved experiences and outcomes, at present there is no research of statistical evidence to substantiate this view.”

(Harker *et al.*, 2004a, pp. 19-20)

This study can only add a small amount of data to support the intuitive notion that corporate parenting and the multi-agency collaboration associated with this concept will improve the educational experiences and outcomes for looked after pupils. However, it is my belief that the study does show some movement in the willingness and actions of teachers and social workers to work together to achieve a shared goal. Whilst good practice is still variable on the side of both professions, when individuals who are committed to corporate parenting liaise with similarly minded workers, there is a good outcome for the young person. A recent unsolicited comment from Wendy and Ian’s social worker reinforced this, when she stated the belief that –

“Both of them would have been permanently excluded, if they were not looked after.” (Jen, 4/4/2005)

The Guidance (DfEE/DoH, 2000) highlighted that, prior to its publication, looked after children were statistically much more likely to be permanently excluded than the general population of school pupils. Therefore, this situation could indicate a significant change to the practice of the school they attend.

The change has been slower than anticipated and demanded by the Government and it has not been evidenced by achieving the targets set for local authorities around achievement and attendance. Five years is a relatively short period to achieve change of such a fundamental nature and it may be that the Government may have to use different tools to measure progress, e.g. indicators of value-added progression.

Other initiatives introduced by the Government to improve social mobility have similarly failed. Lightfoot (Telegraph, 25/04/2005) reported on the centralised secondary school admission system resulting in a sharp rise in the number of privately educated children gaining state grammar school places. She reported that parental choice was “a reality only for well-off families.”

First highlighted in 1976 (Essen *et al.*) and with significant research studies being undertaken in the late 1980’s (Jackson, 1987; Fletcher-Campbell and Hall, 1990), there has been long-standing recognition of the difficulties in education of looked after children, resulting in under-achievement. To address these issues, the government has introduced several initiatives (see, for example, DfE, 1994; Ofsted/SSI, 1995; DfEE/DoH, 2000; SEU, 2003). These initiatives not only highlighted the problems and causes but also suggested methods of effecting improvement. In terms of this study, the most significant were the introduction of designated teachers and personal education plans for young people in public care (DfEE/DoH, 2000). The identification of a designated teacher had been recommended, but widely ignored, in the 1994 Circular (LAC[94]). Whilst the 2000 Guidance resulted in schools appointing someone to the post, the expected outcomes in terms of improved educational achievement did not meet the Government’s targets. This study has illustrated that having a person in the post does not ensure improvement to collaboration with other agencies or the experiences of the young people. The culture and ethos of the school and the experience, training and perceptions of the postholder impact on the effectiveness of the post.

Given that research has identified many factors that impact on the education of looked after children, e.g. stability of placement, expectations, etc, it is not surprising that the initiatives that have been introduced have not had the desired or expected outcomes. The previous Government guidances were largely non-statutory, although the inspection processes of SSI and Ofsted reported on the educational achievements of looked after children. For most schools, this was a very minor part of the process, given the small number (if any) in any one school.

Although outside of the research period of this study, there are now new Government initiatives that attempt to address the educational under-achievement of looked after children. The Children Act 2004 places a new duty on local authorities to promote their educational achievement. The statutory guidance to implement this describes the essential actions which local authorities are expected to take in order to raise their educational achievement, including making sure all looked after children –

- “have their educational needs properly identified;
- are provided with appropriate education;
- are involved with schools’ designated teachers in drawing up ... PEPs.”

(DfES, 2005b)

The guidance is not new thinking but it places a statutory duty on local authorities to undertake actions. For Shiretown, this should ensure that there is not the team variation illustrated in this study.

The *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (DfES, 2004a), underpinned by the Children Act 2004, should provide the framework for collaborative working, in that it states that better outcomes depend on the integration of universal services and bringing services together around the needs of the child.

Through partnership, the Government’s vision for children’s services is for children and young people to –

- “Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being” (DfES, 2004a)

To achieve the last three of these for looked after children and young people, it is paramount that there is an improvement to their educational achievement. The introduction of Children's Trusts, which incorporate all the partner agencies, e.g. schools, Children's Services and health, should provide the framework to effectively undertake this work.

Limitations

Whilst this study explored the contribution of designated teachers to corporate parenting for Shiretown's population of young people in public care, there were several limitations:

- a) The sample size was small and only included secondary provision. Although I attempted to explore whether the type of school, e.g. mainstream or special, impacted on the role of the designated teacher, because the categories of specialism of the two special schools were different, it meant that it was not possible to draw any conclusions on type of provision as a significant variable.
- b) The survey of social workers indicated that location was a factor in determining whether or not they could establish collaborative working. Of the five schools in the sample, four were situated in and the fifth was very close to Shiretown. However, many of Shiretown's looked after pupils were in placements and schools at some distance from Shiretown and this was not represented in the sample.
- c) The concept of corporate parenting includes many more partners than teachers and social workers. Most significant of these would be carers and this was highlighted in the interviews with the young people, in that the majority of them identified their carer as being the main supporter of their education. Carers were not surveyed to ascertain their perceptions on corporate parenting.
- d) In researching the five designated teachers, my own role as Teacher/Advisor for Looked After Children impacted on the interventions and subsequent outcomes. This was probably best evidenced by the incident of Lennie. Until

I was aware of the situation and became involved, the proposal from the designated teacher was to permanently exclude him to force the social worker and LEA to identify an appropriate school place for him. This situation had arisen because the social worker was not co-operating with the school. With my involvement, transfer to an appropriate placement was achieved without resort to disciplinary action. This incident highlighted that –

“While designated teachers may be keen to collaborate with other colleagues, they are dependent on an effective response and cannot achieve the necessary outcomes without mutual respect for the task.” (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 2004, p. 132)

Whilst my position had some influence on the outcomes, I believe that it also facilitated me being able to have access to data that I would not be able to as an independent researcher.

Recommendations

All of the above limitations would appear to indicate areas for further research. Whilst this study does not provide the statistical evidence to substantiate the notion that corporate parenting will enhance the educational experiences and outcomes for looked after pupils, I believe that it gives examples that good collaborative practice has positive outcomes for looked after pupils. Therefore, my recommendations are around consolidating this good practice and facilitating frameworks for collaboration. Shiretown should ensure that social workers engage in the collaborative process with designated teachers and schools.

Harker *et al.* (2004a) identified that

“... the social services system did not afford sufficient specialisation in educational issues or promote the need for effective communication and liaison between individual social workers and schools.” (p. 4)

However, the survey of social workers indicated that there were some examples of good practice and that this appeared to be a team-based. Quality assurance should ensure that social workers in all teams, working with looked after young people, undertake regular liaison with the schools attended by the young people. This should be monitored by the regular supervision sessions with Team Managers/Assistant Team Managers and the statutory review process.

In addition to joint training for all involved in corporate parenting, good practice needs to be disseminated to all schools and this could be achieved by the formation of a network of designated teachers, as recommended by the Guidance (DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 33). In this way, the hope would be that all teachers will recognise the very special needs of looked after young people and, as corporate parents -

“... try to provide the kind of support that any good parent would give to their children. ... to make sure that children in public care get a good start in life.”
(DfEE/DoH, 2000, p. 50)

Contribution of Study

The study has confirmed the assertions made by the literature (DfEE/DoH, 2000), through the provision of empirical data, in terms of the prerequisites and conditions for the role of the designated teacher to facilitate corporate parenting. It has also demonstrated the improvement to the educational experience of Shiretown's looked after pupils, when these are present. Furthermore, based on this, the rich nature of the data obtained has enabled identification of areas of further research, which could further enhance understanding in this important area. The study has also facilitated the formulation of recommendations to build upon good practice and actions necessary to build multi-agency working that is necessary to implement the principles of corporate parenting.

The serial failure of so many initiatives to improve the educational achievement of this vulnerable group is disappointing. Therefore, the major contribution of this

study is the illustration of the positives that can be achieved by effective collaboration and the possibilities of extending the practice, so that there can be improvements in the educational experiences of Shiretown's cohort of looked after children and young people.

In terms of the author's personal development, Cornelius, Gray and Moore (1999) suggested that research can both enrich the lives of those being researched and enhance the researcher's self esteem. The analysis involved in undertaking this research study has involved the author being a reflective practitioner, which undoubtedly leads to changing and improving professional practice, which can benefit both practitioner and client. Cooke (2005) supported this view, with the statement that –

“Reflective practice has been shown to improve both client care and practitioner role satisfaction.” (p. 248)

As well as acquiring some mastery of the research tools, the reading necessary for the literature review empowered the author in having some expertise of areas that impact on looked after children. This undoubtedly strengthened the advocacy element of the Teacher/Advisor role, when dealing with other professionals.

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Designated teachers

5.27 Day-to-day schooling has the potential to improve significantly the quality of life of children in public care. In recognition of this, Circular 13/94¹¹ recommended that headteachers in primary schools and year tutors in secondary schools “hold a watching brief for all children being looked after”. While some schools may have acted upon this advice, research and practice suggest that this approach has not been widespread. There are often no formal arrangements by which schools work with social services and LEAs to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in public care.

There is evidence that schools with inclusive policies, robust pastoral systems and clear lines of communication with outside agencies are more likely to offer effective support to any child who is ‘different’. But this does not provide a sufficient safeguard for children in public care. Having a designated teacher, who understands about care and the impact of care upon education, in each school is critical to making joint working a reality. Schools will need to decide who is the most appropriate person to fill this role. It would be desirable for it to be someone with sufficient authority to influence school policy and practice.

5.29 A designated teacher, with sufficient authority to make things happen, is an important resource for the child, carers and parents, social workers and other teachers, school governors and support staff. She or he should be an advocate for young people in public care, accessing services and support, and ensuring that the school shares and supports high expectations for them. The designated teacher should also ensure speedy transfer of educational information between agencies and individuals, and ensure that each child has a Personal Education Plan (see paragraph 5.17) and that a Home-School Agreement is drawn up with the primary carer. This should happen even when the child’s stay is thought to be only temporary as young people who are in and out of care are likely to experience disruption in their education and similar disadvantages to those who are in public care for longer periods.

5.30 The designated teacher might be well placed to take on a wider remit covering all children receiving assistance from social services. This might be particularly advisable in smaller schools. Some young people in care have suggested that giving designated teachers a wider remit would be a good idea, as this would make it less likely that young people would feel singled out.

5.31 They also would prefer to choose who they would trust to talk to, and this would not necessarily be the designated teacher. This flexible approach to supporting young people is likely to be the most effective as long as the designated teacher is available to ensure that support is properly co-ordinated.

5.32 The local authority should provide designated teachers with training

which should cover all aspects of the care system and the impact of care upon education, responsibilities under the Children Act and associated Regulations, and the role of the school in relation to care planning and statutory Reviews.

5.33 A network of designated teachers would strengthen the overall role of the local authority in acting as corporate parent, by sharing expertise about tailored packages of support, preventing unnecessary moves of school or exclusion and minimising delay. Local Authorities should keep a list of designated teachers not only for their own internal communication and networking but also to assist other authorities that have placed children within the authority.

5.34 To summarise, schools should designate a teacher to act as a resource and advocate for children and young people in public care. LEAs and SSDs should co-ordinate suitable training for them and maintain an up-to-date list of designated teachers in schools in their area.

PROFILES OF SAMPLE SCHOOLS

[These profiles are produced from information in OfSTED reports – date of inspection indicated after name of school.]

	No. of Pupils	Overview	What school does well	Areas for improvement	Pupils attitudes and values	Attainment	Resources	Care of Pupils
Mainstream A (October 2002)	1085	Good school with many very good features Continues to gain confidence of local community and promotes culture of improvement and inclusion	Leadership by headteacher is excellent Leadership and management are very good and subject departments are led effectively Pupils make good progress, particularly higher and lowest attaining	Attainment of highest lower attaining pupils Provision for RE Accommodation of whole school events	Good. Majority concentrate well, work hard and make positive contributions Behaviour – good Relationships are good and have a positive impact on pupils' learning	On entry a little below average In some year groups slightly more pupils not reached level expected In 6 th form, attainment on entry below average		Good in main school and very good in 6 th form Pupils benefit academically and as members of community
Mainstream C (October 2002)	820	Popular school Broadly satisfactory education Satisfactory standards of achievement Pupils positive attitude and behaviour	Gives priority to pupils' personal development Appropriate provision for particular needs of all children Teaching overall good Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development Effective communication with parents	Standards Use of IEPs Support for new staff Use of action plans	Good attitudes and behaviour Very good relationships amongst pupils and with staff Pupils respond well to opportunities for personal development	On entry at 11, attainment below national average. Pupils entering 6 th form largely in line with national average	Asperger Resource Centre Proportion of pupils with SEN = national average Statemented pupils above national average	Good
Education Other (May 2000)	4 sites at some distance from each other – small group/individual teaching on premises or in children's homes	Good service. Pupils respond well to staff and have good behaviour at centre and off site activities Attendance improved to that of previous school, which has positive effect upon academic/social progress Most pupils take range of accredited courses.	Quality of teaching good Quality of teamwork evident Unit well led by headteacher Quality of relationships between staff and pupils is good Pupils attitudes are good Curriculum makes best use of resources and gives pupils good opportunities for academic success	Governing role of LEA under-developed. No management committee to monitor and support the unit Management adversely affects curriculum provided Attendance of pupils is unsatisfactory Length of taught time for some pupils is too short Pupils statements of SEN require closer monitoring Pupils IEPs lack precision and are insufficiently shared with parents.	Good overall. Pupils have regard for unit, staff & accreditation Behaviour – pupils exhibit common courtesy and respect for staff. Apply themselves well and sometimes show pride in achievements. In 50% lessons, pupils behave well. In 25% lessons, minority of pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory – usually facilitating circumstances.			

	No. of Pupils	Overview	What school does well	Areas for improvement	Pupils attitudes and values	Attainment	Resources	Care of Pupils
Special B (March 2002)	56	Most pupils progress satisfactorily but few making little headway in increasing knowledge because of attendance issues	Provides balanced curriculum, including NC, PSHE, RE, careers, work experience and opportunity to attend college of FE at Key Stage 4 to study for vocational accreditation Quality of teaching continued to improve Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively Reduction in number of temporary exclusions, as pupils' self-esteem, and respect for peers and adults improves Staff apply behaviour-management strategy well and pupils are keen to know their progress	To improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills Review schemes of work and broadening range of accredited courses available at KS4 Ensure school's behaviour-management strategy is consistently applied Improve attendance	Pupils know and accept school's behaviour management policy and generally respond positively when reminded behaviour is inappropriate. At times language used by pupils was unacceptable and were slow to moderate. Attitudes to study and behaviour improved. Pupils concentrate well, apply knowledge and understanding with confidence and display independence. Good relationships between staff and pupils	In KS4, pupils progressing towards completion of accreditation at C of A and GCSE in a range of subjects and ASDAN Youth Awards at bronze and silver level		Teachers assess work carefully, particularly through questioning during the plenary session, record progress and use this to prepare future assignments.
Special L (September 1998)	229 (from 2 19 years)	School catchment is wide, with pupils being drawn from rural and urban areas Pupil population reflects mixed social and cultural backgrounds of areas in which they live, ranging from local authority housing to owner occupied housing in the town and small villages in the surrounding countryside.	Provides good and often very good teaching for pupils Enables good progress in listening and speaking and in reading Good teaching and learning in French Liaises closely an supports parents of pupils with challenging behaviour Good value for money Gives youngest pupils happy and sound start to education Headteacher provides strong and visionary leadership and is well supported by staff, governors and LEA Good support to staff and curriculum through a well stocked and informative curriculum resource area	Provision of and teaching of ICT Resources for pupils needing 'high tech' communication aids School strategies for identifying pupils' progress Monitoring by subject co-ordinators of classroom teaching Poor accommodation for some KS2 pupils	Behaviour - good in and around school, with good attitudes to work and learning Good attendance Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, whilst provision for social and moral development is good. The school provides a caring, supportive environment in which all pupils, including those with additional needs and autism, can thrive and develop. Staff have understanding of pupil needs which are used effectively to promote progress.			A spirit of harmony pervades. Quality of relationships, including the degree of racial harmony, is good.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR DESIGNATED TEACHERS

1. Would you like to talk to me about some of the difficulties that this school has experienced with the any of the pupils because they are looked after?

Probes: *difficulties with –*

Learning
Behaviour – exclusions?
Attendance
Motivation - coursework/homework completion

Disaffection
Lack of success - their or your perceptions

2. What do you think that social workers and carers could do to attempt to improve the educational experience of these young people?

Probes: *Messages: importance of education*
Support youngsters
Support schools

3. Is there anything that schools/teachers could do differently to improve the situation for looked after children?

Probes: *Support for pupils*
Collaboration with carers/workers

4. Can you give an example of where you feel there has been good collaboration between yourself and Social Services which has resulted in a good outcome for a young person?

Probes: *What did the social worker/carer/other do? Why was this successful? What did the school do to involve them?*

5. Can you give any other examples of when this approach has worked?

6. Can you give me an example of where neither carers nor a social worker has been involved with a school in an attempt to resolve difficulties for a looked after child?

Probes: *What was the outcome?*
Were carers/social worker aware that there were any

difficulties?

Did the school try to get them involved? If not, why not?

Was this an isolated case or have you other examples?

Having had this experience how would you now tackle a similar situation?

- 7. What do you think are the barriers/difficulties in securing co-operation/ collaboration between schools, social workers and carers for the young people in public care?**

Probes: *Do the roles of those involved in corporate parenting (i.e. schools, social workers, carers, parents) need to be more clearly defined?*

Should social workers take a more leading role?

Does social worker intervention interfere with your relationship with carers?

- 8. Have you any ideas on how we can establish a framework for collaboration between schools, social workers and carers?**

Probe: *What can we do so that we do not just respond to crisis situations?*

This is a true representation of my discussion and I give permission for it to be used in the research study.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR DESIGNATED TEACHERS

S.B. Designated teacher for school for pupils with learning difficulties in neighbouring lea.

Interview conducted: June 2002

JH: Would you like to talk to me about some of the difficulties that this school has experienced with the any of the pupils because they are looked after?

Difficulties of multi-agency working?
Roles of those involved in corporate parenting.

SB: Most of the pupils ... most of the problems we have with our looked after pupils is a lack of ... erm ... cohesion sometimes with whom we are dealing, with our lack of knowledge with whether we should be using any different strategies than we do with pupils who are not looked after. And that is particularly relevant in terms of things like ... erm ... abuse, procedures, detentions, parents' evenings ... all of the things where we would have more contact with parents ... and more contact with parents doesn't always work, but there are sometimes problems if the child is looked after, particularly if they are looked after by ... we have got one child looked after by L. and, for example, we have difficulty knowing whether L. are coming, how much we should be giving to L., what we should be ... there is no clear guidelines about ... particularly from Social Services about this what we would like education to do with our looked after children.

Training issues/framework for collaborative working practices?

JH: How have these difficulties manifested themselves with the actual kids, I mean learning, behaviour ...

Attendance better – because special school and associated transport provision?

SB: Noticeably, no ... I ... I would think you would get more of a picture of that within a mainstream setting because a lot of our pupils anyway ... attendance, certainly not no. In fact if anything, to be honest, attendance tends to be better with looked after children. With motivation, we have not noticed any differences

Are issues around motivation different in special school?

JH: What do you think that social workers and carers could do to attempt to improve the educational experience of these young people?

Corporate parenting issues

SB: I think the schools ... erm ... primarily make contact with the child's teacher, come to things like the parents' evenings so that they are aware of what they are being taught. Maybe have close links with school activities, so that if there was a ... an activity day, that parents were coming to, **carers and perhaps social workers would come to**. We ... we've not ever gone down that road but I have often thought that it would be ... particularly when our pupils are in residential homes, nice for their keyworkers to come and, in fact, ... is it okay if I ramble on like this?

JH: Yes, absolutely.

Example of positive collaborative working.

SB: This year we have a pupils who ... a looked after child in care with W., living in a residential home and we wanted him to come on our school residential but because of the specific problems that he has got ... there are lots of problems with that but, in fact, his keyworkers came with him on school residential and I was really pleased with that and that worked really well. They had to do it in two shifts – they had to send someone Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; somebody Thursday, Friday. Erm ... but it was excellent, **it really worked and I was pleased about that**. I thought we will be able to do this again. It took quite a bit of setting up but the home that the boy is living in were **very co-operative** as well; they'd wanted to do it and we wanted it. It was the first time we had done anything like that and it worked well.

Good experiences of collaborative working

JH: Or ... or perhaps again, because it is a special school, this is not the same sort of thing ... erm ... do carers and social workers give the right messages about the importance of education?

Staff of former residential children's home not encouraging/supporting education of young people.

SB: Here within B. setting we have nothing but **positive input**. The only time I professionally ever came upon a problem with that was when I was at R. and the home in S.P.H. ... that ... that quite a lot of the students lived in ... erm ... there **was no support for homework, there was no support for**

Awareness of
identified difficulty

actual attendance. I know they had a very difficult client group there ... erm ... relationships then between staff and staff in that particular residential setting were not good ... erm ... and I think traditionally they have not been good. When I went for a job in B. once, which was ... erm ... erm ... dealing a lot with EBD children, one of the things that the ... I was asked in the interview, was how would I forge links with residential care workers particularly and schools because that, in B. anyway, at that time which was about 3 years ago was perceived as a big problem, a big breakdown in the educational value of what was going on. Personally, I haven't found it here.

JH: Is there anything that schools or teachers could do differently to improve the situation for looked after children? Or perhaps that is what you said, going back to the beginning, that you need more knowledge/more guidance from Social Services,.

Information
sharing

Training need?

SB: Yes, yes and ... I think a greater awareness of the personal circumstances of the pupil, so that if you are having a looked after child coming into your class ... I mean it is something that I want ... well, it is something that I do do here, is to make sure that the teacher concerned is aware of the background, is aware of the circumstances, is aware of potential problems that the child might be experiencing, which were not always you would just get a child come into your class and ... erm ... you would read their file. It is heightening our awareness as well of what is happening in that particular pupil's life that could be impinging on ...

JH: And that has got to be information given to you by Social Services.

SB: It has really, yes.

JH: Can you give an example of where you feel there has been good collaboration between yourself and Social Services (carers, social workers, whatever) which has resulted in a good outcome for a young person?

Another example of working together

SB: One that springs to mind was the residential last year, which was hugely important ... erm ... for the 13 year old lad concerned who desperately wanted to go on the residential. It was an enormously positive outcome for him. More recently, we worked closely with social workers in Shiretown with a family to get ... erm ... pupils put on the child protection register. The outcome was satisfactory and it took quite a bit of collaboration.

JH: They are quite few and far between then? You have to think?

Barrier to working together.

SB: They are. They are really ... erm ... Inherent mistrust between social workers and teachers and it is both ways ... you know, a multi-faceted mix. About 5, 6, 7 years ago I went to a day put on where social workers had to get together and put up on a wall what their impressions of teachers were and we all had to put up our perceptions of social workers and it was, you know they see us as people drifting around in life without any real purpose and they were real perceptions. The stereotypes were very strong.

JH: Em, so one of things is more and more joint training – multi-professional training.

Multi-agency training?

SB: I think it is a huge way forward.

JH: Have [neighbouring local authority] given you training yet as a designated teacher?

SB: They have a lot of input from The National Children's Homes, a woman called S. M.

JH: She doesn't work for the NCH any more; she works for A.

On the other hand then, we were talking about positive examples of collaboration, can you give me an example of where neither carers nor a social worker has been involved with a school in an attempt to resolve difficulties for a looked after child?

SB: I can but I want to be very careful about the confidentiality of this, it was when a looked after family here left and we felt that neither ... we felt

that the needs of the pupils at the time, educationally, were not being met.

JH: Was it the family that I am thinking of? Were there three of them?

SB: Yes, went to H.

JH: Yes.

SB: There were lots of problems with the H's. Special Ed. people just said, "Right, we will put them here, here and here" and we said, "Well, you know, this is a very traumatised family. We have had lots of problems with them and we need to do this and this" and it really **all broke down from our point of view.**

School not involved nor consulted in decision-making process

JH: Did the social worker get much involved in that?

SB: No. No.

JH: I felt, at the time, that it was a very 'runaway train' and ... erm ... certainly, the last one to get placed, that happened over the summer holidays, didn't it? Really she left with no preparation.

SB: And also she didn't have any preparation for going into the school. She needs a lot of support. Whether she will succeed or not – I don't know and I – I – I hate to say things like this but it could all have been managed a whole lot better and it is one of those circumstances where the system, I think, did all break down and didn't work.

Financial decision rather than based on the needs of the young people.

JH: I think, I mean, there was a **determination on the part of the carers – no doubt about that – and totally supported by the lea and I think that the reason that Shiretown lea didn't get involved was that H. had taken over the whole funding, which they didn't need to. It was still very much Shiretown's responsibility in terms of funding for all those kids, until the actual adoption.**

SB That is probably one of the most recent examples of where it has gone wrong.

JH: There was no way of involving ...
involving, of getting involved ...

SB: We kept asking. We kept saying, "Can we prepare them if we know what schools they are going to? Can we send their work?" There was just a complete breakdown.

JH: Was that an isolated case or just the worst?

SB: I think the worst really.

JH: How did that happen. Do you ... do you think you could have tackled ... could tackle it differently if the same thing ...?

SB: I think ... erm ... we would try to be a lot more pro-active than we were. I think we would make greater strides to try to involve somebody like you in it. But I think, at the time, we had lost the confidence of the carers and that was quite critical. I think they wanted them out of here at all cost and nothing was going to stop them and I think maybe ... we ... if we saw that situation happening **again we would have much greater consultation with parents or carers.**

Recognition
of the need to
work
together

JH: With the parental responsibility in that, that would be shared with Social Services.

SB: But we were told in no uncertain terms that they had. Even mister saying that he was not going to allow ...

JH: What do you think are the barriers/difficulties in securing co-operation/collaboration ...?

Information
sharing

SB: I think the biggest thing is **confidentiality**. When the social worker comes into a school ... there are still a lot of schools who feel, "Should we ... " and a prime example of that is the SATs results, "Is it okay to give you SATs results or should we be asking parents/carers/social services?" All of that hang up about ... erm ... "Do we ... ?" ... what lines of communication we have with you, without the parents because, as

Procedures to
facilitate multi-
agency
working

educators, we will work primarily with parents and carers but with looked after children that line is somewhat grey and fractionated and it is a case of ... if we have a problem with the young person, say that you deal with a lot, should we be coming straight to social services, straight to the foster carer? I think with those if there were, I mean I realise it is probably different every case, but if there ... **guidelines about if this situation happens, these are the recommended steps**, i.e. phone the duty social worker or always phone the foster carer first – that is always your first point of call or, you know ... **a flow chart would be quite useful for schools**. That is why I think that one of the pages of your ... erm ... *Personal Education Plan*, which has got listed all of the contact, I think that is one of the most useful things that I have seen in terms of how we can make sure there is continuity. You know if we see a problem arising or work tailing off, you know, to have **all those contacts listed out is incredibly useful**. Instead of thinking, "I don't really know who to contact about this", we could immediately go to the file and say, "Right, well the keyworker is this person", you know, "... foster carer is that person. We need to be telling them that so-and-so is whatever, fighting a lot or crying a lot or ... " any of the things of the things you would normally just give a parent a ring and say, "Just to let you know".

JH: So it is about really ... more clear definitions of the roles of the players involved.

SB: It is, yeah.

JH: Do you think social workers should take a more leading role or, again, do you think this depends on the carers? Or does social worker intervention interfere with your relationship with carers?

SB: I can't think of a case where it has.

JH: I would hope it wouldn't because most times if a social worker comes along it is because they have a good relationship with the carer and want to support the carer and would see themselves in that role.

Negative experience of social worker involvement

SB: Last year we had that role – we have a particularly difficult parent ... erm ... and the input from social worker, who is now retired, was not in the slightest bit positive. They both came into class observing and they both came into class ... erm ... and that wasn't positive. The social worker involved, instead of maybe supporting the mum in other ways, was in fact feeding her ...

JH: Negative views?

SB: Yes. But I think that is probably one of the only times that we have had quite a few run ins with.

JH: Have you any ideas on how we can establish a framework for collaboration between schools, social workers and carers?

Consultation with those involved to identify joint working practices

Identified barriers to effective collaboration

Ease of contact

SB: Once all schools have got designated persons, I think it would be a good idea to, first of all, as you have said, to get the views of the carers, get the views of the social workers and the views of the designated ... and then look for joint ways forward. Look at ... maybe set up a series of proposals: 1) ... you know ... what are the lines of communication? How better? – and I am sure you will find the problems will be based around knowledge and understanding and communication. Erm ... once that sort of ... focus group ... was in place ... the designated person can feed back and train the rest of the staff. Erm ... you know, social workers once they know they have one person in a school they can identify with, they will probably find that because they probably find schools are chasms of inefficiency just as much as any other organisation, when you try and access somebody. You know, they would ring up and say, "I don't know who to speak to". Once you have got one named person you can cling on to that can't you and say, "I want to speak to so-and-so".

JH: So they act as a conduit?

SB: Yes, yes.

JH: ... which is what I think they should be, rather than trying to do everything.

SB: Yes, yes.

JH: Yes, absolutely. And that is exactly what schools say about social services.

SB: Yes, you ring up and say, "Can I speak to ..." and you have no idea who you are speaking to or whether you will ever speak to them again or ... or ...

JH: And then you get transferred and start the whole story again.

Importance of the role of designated teacher as point of contact for social workers/carers + Information for schools re. contact details.

SB: Yes, yes. So, I think, **named people will be ... that is why us knowing who the keyworkers are in terms of that child is a step forward because ... because we have never had that information before.**

This is a true representation of my discussion and I give permission for it to be used in the research study.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH DESIGNATED TEACHERS : INITIAL PHASE – INITIAL ANALYSIS

Issues	CH	SG	JP	SB	EL	ZL	Total
Value of sharing information	✓		✓✓	✓✓✓ ✓	✓	✓	5(9)
Need for framework for information sharing	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓		5(8)
Barriers to working together, including financial				✓✓			1(2)
Communication difficulties/need for framework for communication	✓✓✓	✓	✓		✓✓		4(8)
Particular difficulties in joint working with children's homes					✓	✓	2(2)
School giving some stability/normalisation	✓✓✓		✓✓			✓	3(6)
Insight into needs/difficulties of CiPC	✓	✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	5(8)
Insight into behaviours that result from LAC status	✓		✓			✓✓✓	3(5)
Desire to work collaboratively	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓		✓	5(8)
Need for commitment for multi-agency working from all professionals	✓		✓	✓✓		✓	4(5)
Need for framework for collaborative working	✓		✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		4(8)
Significant person/role models		✓	✓✓			✓	3(4)
Need for more flexibility in curricula to tackle poor attendance/disaffection	✓	✓					2(2)
Role of designated teacher, including time/role difficulties	✓		✓✓✓ ✓		✓	✓	4(7)
Arrangements for undertaking role of designated teacher within school, e.g. delegation, dedicated time for role/liaison/PEP meetings	✓	✓					2(5)
Existing frameworks in schools to enable designated teacher role to be implemented effectively	✓	✓			✓	✓✓	5(5)
Understanding of other professionals' roles/difficulties	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓		5(8)
Need for joint training	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓✓✓	5(8)

Issues	CH	JS	JP	SB	EL	ZL	Total
Example of positive collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓		5(10)
Difficulties for schools in being inclusive		✓				✓	
Additional support required to enable LA young people to improve academic achievement		✓					1(1)
Importance of education to improve life chances		✓	✓			✓✓	3(4)
Importance of regular attendance in relation to academic success		✓			✓		2(2)
Lack of uniform working practices between different local authorities			✓✓				1(2)
Difficulties arising because of out of authority placements			✓✓				1(2)
Claim that ethos of school is 'inclusive/nurturing'			✓		✓✓	✓✓	3(4)
Recognition that education difficulties pre-date care episodes			✓				1(1)
Positive discrimination vs. stigmatisation			✓			✓✓	2(3)
'Messages' given to young people about value of education					✓✓	✓	2(3)
Building on arrangements established in primary schools			✓				1(1)
Primary/Special school – differences: attendance/motivation			✓	✓✓			2(3)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PUBLIC CARE

Please complete the following questionnaire by putting a tick in one of the boxes for each question. [If you wish to complete it electronically, type 't' in the selected box and press F3 (top row)]

Note: Answer frame is five scale from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'. In addition, there is a column 'Insufficient information' if you are unable to answer the question because of this reason.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Insufficient information
1	One of the main purposes of education is to increase a young person's knowledge.						
2	All the schools I deal with have a designated teacher for young people in public care.						
3	It is difficult to liaise with some schools when social workers are seeking information/requesting a meeting.						
4	Officers of the local education authority should be responsible for identifying and securing a looked after young person's educational placement.						
5	Education is an activity that only takes place in schools.						
6	I send the necessary paperwork to schools to request a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting within the local authority's timescale.						
7	The post of designated teacher for young people in public care has improved my experience of liaison with some schools.						
8	Facilitating access to education is an activity which requires collaboration of all those involved with looked after young people.						
9	The time involved in collaborative working with some schools is justified by positive educational outcomes for looked after pupil(s).						
10	The time involved in collaborative working with some schools is not justified by the educational outcomes for looked after pupil(s).						
11	Personal Education Plans are important in terms of attempting to improve the educational experience of young people.						
12	I know the target time for securing an educational placement for a young person when s/he comes into the care system.						
13	One of the main purposes of education is to socialise young people.						
14	From my experience, most designated teachers are committed to 'champion' the looked after young people in their school.						
15	'Joined up' working practices amongst schools, Social Service and Education Departments can result in improvement in young people's educational experience(s).						

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Insufficient information
16	It is necessary to complete Personal Education Plans to meet Department of Health targets.						
17	The post of designated teacher for young people in public care has not made a difference to my experience of liaising with some schools.						
19	From my experience, most schools expect social workers to attend school-based meetings when they are experiencing difficulties with a young person.						
20	Most teachers I work with are aware of the general difficulties experienced by young people who are looked after, which may affect their behaviour, e.g. attachment disorder.						
21	Social workers can play a major role in the education of looked after young people.						
22	Changing schools because of location of the care placement may have a detrimental effect on a looked after young person's educational achievements.						
23	I know the target time for completing a Personal Education Plan for a young person when they change school/education provision.						
24	Completion of Personal Education Plans is the responsibility of the school.						
25	One of the main purposes of education is to increase the employment opportunities for young people.						
26	Designated teachers for young people in public care are aware of the general difficulties that young people who are looked after may experience, e.g. attachment disorder, low self-esteem.						
27	It is essential that social workers prioritise the education of looked after young people in seeking foster/residential placements.						
28	There should be greater levels of collaboration between social workers and schools to improve the educational experience of looked after young people.						
29	Generally, young people being in school/educational placement is essential to care placements being maintained.						
30	Personal Education Plans can be effectively completed without a meeting of all those involved with the young person.						
31	Designated teachers for young people in public care will require training to enable them to undertake their role in an effective way.						
32	I adhere to the local authority's timescale for informing schools of placement/worker details.						
33	I would not move a young person to another residential/foster placement unless an education placement had been secured for him/her.						

Please use the following space if you have any other comments about how the education of looked after young people might be improved.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this.

Team : _____

No. of schools currently worked with: ____

Date: _____

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE – SOCIAL WORKERS: Initial Phase		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Insufficient information
1	One of the main purposes of education is to increase a young person's knowledge.	3 3 1	4 2	1	1		
13	One of the main purposes of education is to socialise young people.	2 1	6 1	3	2		
25	One of the main purposes of education is to increase the employment opportunities for young people.	3 1	7 1	2	1		
5	Education is an activity that only takes place in schools.			1	3 1 1	6 1 2	
21	Social workers can play a major role in the education of looked after young people.	1 1	5 1	3 1 1	1		1
27	It is essential that social workers prioritise the education of looked after young people in seeking foster/residential placements.	1 1 1	8 1 1	2			
22	Changing schools because of location of the care placement may have a detrimental effect on a looked after young person's educational achievements.	3 1	5 1 2	1 2			
33	I would not move a young person to another residential/foster placement unless an education placement had been secured for him/her.	1 1	2	1 1	5 3 1		
4	Officers of the local education authority should be responsible for identifying and securing a looked after young person's educational placement.	4 1 2	2 2 1	2	1		
29	Generally, young people being in school/educational placement is essential to care placements being maintained.	3 3	4 1	1 1	1		1
12	I know the target time for securing an educational placement for a young person when s/he comes into the care system.	1	3	1 2	2		3 1 2
3	It is difficult to liaise with some schools when social workers are seeking information/requesting a meeting.	1 1	3 1 1	3 1 1	1 1		1 1
19	From my experience, most schools expect social workers to attend school-based meetings when they are experiencing difficulties with a young person.	1 1 1	5 2	1	1		1
8	Facilitating access to education is an activity which requires collaboration of all those involved with looked after young people.	4 1 2	5 2 1				
15	'Joined up' working practices amongst schools, Social Service and Education Departments can result in improvement in young people's educational experience(s).	3 1 1	6 2 2				
28	There should be greater levels of collaboration between social workers and schools to improve the educational experience of looked after young people.	4 1 2	5 1 1				1
9	The time involved in collaborative working with some schools is justified by positive educational outcomes for looked after pupil(s).	2 2 2	4 1	2 1	1		
10	The time involved in collaborative working with some schools is not justified by the educational outcomes for looked after pupil(s).	2	3 1	2 2	2 1		2

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Insufficient information
32	I adhere to the local authority's timescale for informing schools of placement/worker details.		4 1 2	1 1	4		1 1
7	The post of designated teacher for young people in public care has improved my experience of liaison with some schools.	1	5 1	2 1 1			2 1 1
17	The post of designated teacher for young people in public care has not made a difference to my experience of liaising with some schools.		3 2	1 2	3	1	1 1 1
14	From my experience, most designated teachers are committed to 'champion' the looked after young people in their school.		1	5 1 2	2		1 2 1
26	Designated teachers for young people in public care are aware of the general difficulties that young people who are looked after may experience, e.g. attachment disorder, low self-esteem.	1	3	2 3 2	2		1 1
20	Most teachers I work with are aware of the general difficulties experienced by young people who are looked after, which may affect their behaviour, e.g. attachment disorder.	2	1 1	3 1	6 1		
31	Designated teachers for young people in public care will require training to enable them to undertake their role in an effective way.	4 1	5 3 2				
11	Personal Education Plans are important in terms of attempting to improve the educational experience of young people.	2 2	5 3 1	1			1
16	It is necessary to complete Personal Education Plans to meet Department of Health targets.	2	3 2 1	2 1 1			2 1
6	I send the necessary paperwork to schools to request a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting within the local authority's timescale.	1	1 2 2	2 1	4		1 1
23	I know the target time for completing a Personal Education Plan for a young person when they change school/education provision.	1	2	1 1 1	2		2 2 2
18	I know the target time for completing a Personal Education Plan for a young person when they are brought into the care of the local authority.		3 1	1 1	3		3 1 2
24	Completion of Personal Education Plans is the responsibility of the school.	1	3 2	2 1	3 1		1 1
30	Personal Education Plans can be effectively completed without a meeting of all those involved with the young person.		1	4 2 1	2 2		1 2

Looked After Children's Team
Disabled Children's Team
Leaving Care Team

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. I have already explained to you that there is concern that young people who live separately from their families often experience difficulties in the education system. Could you talk to me about some of the difficulties that you have experienced in the schools you have attended?

Probes: difficulties with – Learning

Behaviour – exclusions?

Attendance

Motivation – coursework/homework completion

Disaffection

Lack of success

When you have had difficulties, were you satisfied with the way it was handled? If not, what would you have wanted?

*Probes: More/less involvement of carers/social worker, etc.
More support from teachers*

2. Do you feel that you are succeeding in school? If so, how do you measure this success?

Probes: Achievement/attainment

Behaviour

Popularity with peers

Popularity with teachers

Happiness

3. If not, can you tell me about a time when you felt you were succeeding in school?

*Probes: What made the difference – support from school/home/care?
Why not maintained?*

4. What could either your social worker or carer do to attempt to improve your educational experience?

Probes: *Messages: importance of education*
 Support youngsters
 Support schools

5. **Is there anything that schools/teachers could do differently to improve the situation for looked after children?**

Probes: *Support for pupils*
 Collaboration with carers/workers

6. **For young people in your position, there can sometimes be rather a lot of meetings and this can involve several people. How do you feel about the involvement of so many people?**

Probes: *List people*

Who do you think made the greatest difference and why?

7. **Is there anything else that you want to tell me about your education?**

This is a true representation of my discussion and I give my permission for it to be used in the research study.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR DESIGNATED TEACHERS

1. What difference do you feel the role of designated teacher has made in your school?

*Probes: Facilitating communication with Social Services/carers?
Outcomes for looked after young people*

2. You initially saw the designated teacher role as “huge” if it was done properly. Do you still think that it is or do you think that you have had to compromise on how you fulfil the post?

*Probes: Meeting with young people every week
Looking at their books
“Totally involved in their life”*

3. What do you need from Social Services to help you to fulfil your role?

*Probes: Information
Support*

4. The Government recommended that designated teachers should be someone with the authority to make things happen. As Deputy Head, how much do you think that being part of the senior management team has been essential in fulfilling the post?

*Probes: Leadership
Training function*

5. Can you give me an example of where there has been good collaboration between yourself and Social Services which has resulted in a good outcome for a young person?

*Probes: What did the social worker/carer/other do? Why was this successful? What did the school do to involve them?
Can you give any other examples of when this approach has worked?*

6. Can you give me an example of where there has not been good collaboration to attempt to resolve difficulties for a looked after child?

*Probes: What was the outcome?
Were carers/social worker aware that there were any difficulties?*

Did the school try to get them involved? If not, why not?

Was this an isolated case or have you other examples?

- 7. What are the barriers (if any) in your school to the role being successful in terms of the outcomes for pupils in public care?**

Probes: *Time?*
 Resources?
 Needs of other pupils?
 Lack of understanding of other teachers?

- 8. We decided to block book the PEP meetings. Has this approach been helpful for the school? Do you think there are any disadvantages in this approach?**

Probes: *Attendance of social workers/carers*

- 9. There was the feeling that the difference in roles between social workers and teachers and their lack of understanding of each other's jobs was a barrier to 'joined up' working. Has this situation improved?**

Probes: *Constraints of timetable v. caseload.*

- 10. "Schools want to be inclusive and work with other agencies to improve the educational experience of young people in public care but league tables mitigate against this." Comments.**

- 11. When we spoke previously you were concerned that teachers were not invited to statutory reviews? Is this still your opinion?**

- 12. Is there anything else you would like to say about the education of children in public care and the corporate parenting of these young people?**

This is a true representation of my discussion and I give permission for it to be used in the research study.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH DESIGNATED TEACHERS : INITIAL ANALYSIS

Issues	CH	JA	SB	ZL	Total
Designated Teacher – overview	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	4(5)
Designated Teacher – undertaking all tasks Effectiveness = number looked after	✓		✓	✓	3(3)
Designated Teacher – one person with responsibility for LAC	✓	✓		✓	3(3)
Designated Teacher – training/information role	✓✓	✓	✓		3(4)
Substantive position of Designated Teacher important	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	4(8)
Perceptions of DT by outside agencies		✓	✓		2(2)
Personality vs position important for role	✓		✓		2(2)
Desire to undertake role of DT effectively	✓✓			✓	2(3)
Difficulties arising because of out of authority placements	✓		✓✓		2(3)
Importance of good communication systems	✓✓	✓DT role ✓	✓✓		3(3)
Communication difficulties	✓✓	✓✓	✓		3(3)
Need for lead person in Social Services - communication		✓			1(1)
Need for good information sharing	✓✓		✓✓		2(2)
Barriers to collaborative working	✓		✓		2(2)
Difference of special provision			✓✓✓ ✓	✓	2(5)
Value-added measures	✓				1(1)
School giving some stability/normalisation	✓				1(1)
Insight into needs/difficulties of CiPC	✓	✓✓		✓✓✓ Maslow	3(6)

Issues	CH	J	SB	ZL	Total
Example(s) of good collaboration	✓ (not SS) target ✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓ ✓	✓✓✓	4(12)
Personal Education Plans – process	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	4(9)
Personal Education Plans – quality		✓		✓	2(2)
Need for more flexibility in curricula to tackle poor attendance/disaffection		✓			1(1)
Role of designated teacher, including time/role difficulties	✓✓✓	✓			2(4)
Arrangements for undertaking role of designated teacher within school, e.g. delegation, dedicated time for role/liaison/PEP meetings			✓		1(1)
Understanding of other professionals' roles/difficulties	✓	✓	✓		3(3)
Need for joint training		✓	✓		2(2)
Importance of education in improving life chances	✓✓				1(2)
Difficulties for schools in being inclusive		✓		✓	2(2)
Claim that ethos of school is 'inclusive/nurturing'	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓ ✓	4(9)
Understanding of the needs of CiPC	✓	✓✓		✓✓	3(5)
Acknowledgement that not all schools co-operate with Social Services			✓		1(1)
Recognition of improved support for LAC and schools attended from Social Services		✓✓	✓		2(3)
Need to "get it right for LAC"	✓				1(1)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PUBLIC CARE

Please complete the following questionnaire by putting a cross in one of the boxes for each question or writing brief notes in the spaces provided.

There have been several government initiatives to redress the educational difficulties experienced by looked after children. One of the most significant is the *Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)*. This guidance introduced Personal Education Plans and Designated Teachers for Young People in Public Care. The following questions seek your perceptions of the effectiveness of this initiative for the looked after young people you work with.

1	All schools should have a designated teacher for young people in public care. Are you in contact with the designated teachers in all of the schools attended by the young people you work with?	All	Most	Some	Few	None	
2	Could you outline briefly any contact you have had with designated teachers? 						
3	If you are not in contact with the designated teachers, do you have any regular contact with any other member of staff at any of the schools? If so, what is their position in the school? 						

4	<p>In terms of undertaking collaborative working with schools, please indicate which schools you have been able to achieve this with:</p> <p>Schools in Shiretown LEA</p> <p>Schools outside of Shiretown LEA</p> <p>Primary schools</p> <p>Secondary schools</p> <p>Special schools – day</p> <p>Special schools - residential</p> <p>Other educational establishments (e.g. college, pupil referral unit, ECOS, etc.). Please state:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	All	Most	Some	Few	None
5	<p>Do all of the looked after young people you work with have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that was formulated or reviewed in the last six months?</p> <p><i>If answer "Yes" please go to question 6.</i></p>	YES		NO		
5a	<p>If there are some young people without a Personal Education Plan is this because:</p> <p>You have not yet initiated it?</p> <p>School has not responded to social worker's request?</p> <p>School has refused to co-operate?</p> <p>Meeting scheduled but not yet held?</p> <p>Other? – Please state reason:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Please indicate numbers in each category</p>				

6	Where a Personal Education Plan has been completed, please indicate your answers to the following statements about the process involved in completing the plan:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a	The multi-agency involvement at the PEP meeting is the most important aspect of the process.					
b	The targets effectively highlight the educational needs of the child/young person.					
c	The process facilitates joint working between those involved in corporate parenting.					
d	The process provides good information sharing opportunities between those involved in corporate parenting.					
e	The process helps the various agencies to understand their individual roles and responsibilities.					
f	The process helps various professionals understand the boundaries and limitations of other agencies.					
g	The process is time-consuming.					
h	The process adds no value.					
i	The process does not help me give effective support to the young person for whom I have responsibility.					
7	<p>Please briefly outline any indications you have about the value placed on Personal Education Plans and/or the process involved in formulating them by the schools you work?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>					
8	<p>In general, do you think that the schools you work with are fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities to looked after children?</p> <p>Please briefly evidence your answer, e.g. how schools are/are not fulfilling this responsibility.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	All	Most	Some	Few	None

9	<p>Have you changed your practice in any way as a result of the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)?</p> <p><i>If "Yes" please list up to 3 ways in which it has changed:</i></p> <p>1) _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(2) _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(3) _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>If "No" please state why not:</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	YES	NO				
10	<p>Please indicate your responses to the following statements:</p> <p>To effect an improvement to the education of looked after children, Designated Teachers need to be more involved with social work teams.</p> <p>Regular contact should be maintained between Designated Teachers and social workers, rather than just in response to problems.</p>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Insufficient information
11	<p>The Guidance stated that Designated Teachers should 'champion' the looked after children in schools. In your dealings with Designated Teachers, do they fulfil this responsibility?</p>	All	Most	Some	Few	None	
12	<p>Could you please indicate what changes in processes or practices you think would make a positive difference to the educational experiences of the young people in the care of Shiretown Borough Council?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><i>Continue on back, if necessary</i></p>					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this.

Team : _____

Date: _____

No. of schools/educational
establishments currently worked with:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS OF
YOUNG PEOPLE IN PUBLIC CARE: SUMMARY SHEET

		All	Most	Some	Few	None
1	All schools should have a designated teacher for young people in public care. Are you in contact with the designated teachers in all of the schools attended by the young people you work with?					
		1 1 1	1 2	1 1 3		1 2 1
2	Could you outline briefly any contact you have had with designated teachers? None – carer has contact. <i>PEP meetings + issues within school: behviour, pupil’s attitude towards teachers, peer groups, homework, extra support, success & achievements. Worked with DT to bridge gap between them and social workers (for yp placed by other authorities).</i> <i>Difficult to get schools to engage. Some schools not aware if they have DT or who is. Schools unaware of DT role – falls to Head</i> <i>Specific teachers for specific tasks. DT = changes in care arrangements, etc.</i> <i>Most communication has been with the DT – behaviour issues.</i> <i>PEP meetings</i> <i>PEP meetings</i> <i>When initiating PEP meetings but often confusion = Head attended</i> <i>PEP meetings + telephone calls</i> <i>PEP meeting + telephone re. contact arrangements</i> <i>PEP meetings</i> <i>PEP meetings</i>					
3	If you are not in contact with the designated teachers, do you have any regular contact with any other member of staff at any of the schools? If so, what is their position in the school? <i>No contact – carer does</i> <i>Heads of Year, form tutors, SENCOs, Equality Service teachers, learning assistants, Connexions Workers, Admissions Officers, etc. = most relevant</i> <i>Heads of Year and form tutors (when not able to contact DT)</i> <i>Headteachers and class teachers</i> <i>Head of Year, class teacher, Deputy Head, Child Protection Designated Teacher</i> <i>Class teachers</i> <i>Class teachers</i> <i>Head of Year, SENCo</i> <i>Class teacher, Headteacher, School Nurse, Keyworker</i> <i>Head of Year, class teacher, Headteacher, Deputy Head Teacher</i> <i>Deputy Head Teacher</i> <i>Class teacher</i>					

4	In terms of undertaking collaborative working with schools, please indicate which schools you have been able to achieve this with:	All	Most	Some	Few	None
	Schools in Shiretown LEA	3	2 1 3	1 2 1	1	
	Schools outside of Shiretown LEA	3	2	1 3	3	1
	Primary schools	4	2 1	3		
	Secondary schools		1 4	2 3		1
	Special schools – day	1 1	3 1	1 1		1
	Special schools – residential	2	2 2	2		
	Other educational establishments (e.g. college, pupil referral unit, ECOS, etc.). Please state: College – ESOL = excellent Education Other Education Other Education Other Education Other Education Other College Education Other Education Other					
5	Do all of the looked after young people you work with have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that was formulated or reviewed in the last six months? <i>If answer "Yes" please go to question 6.</i>	YES 3 2 6		NO 3 1		

5a	If there are some young people without a Personal Education Plan is this because:	Please indicate numbers in each category				
	You have not yet initiated it?	1 1				
	School has not responded to social worker's request?	1				
	School has refused to co-operate?					
	Meeting scheduled but not yet held?					
	Other? – Please state reason: Taken over case – one not in place					
6	Where a Personal Education Plan has been completed, please indicate your answers to the following statements about the process involved in completing the plan:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a	The multi-agency involvement at the PEP meeting is the most important aspect of the process.	2 2	1 1 6	1		
b	The targets effectively highlight the educational needs of the child/young person.	3	3 4 4			
c	The process facilitates joint working between those involved in corporate parenting.	3 2	3 1 3	2		
d	The process provides good information sharing opportunities between those involved in corporate parenting.	3 4	3 1 4			
e	The process helps the various agencies to understand their individual roles and responsibilities.	2	2 4 2	1 3		
f	The process helps various professionals understand the boundaries and limitations of other agencies.	1	2 2 2	1 2 2	2	
g	The process is time-consuming.	1 1	1	2 2	1 1 3	1 1
h	The process adds no value.			1	2 3 6	1 1
i	The process does not help me give effective support to the young person for whom I have responsibility.			2	2 4 3	1 2

7 Please briefly outline any indications you have about the value placed on Personal Education Plans and/or the process involved in formulating them by the schools you work?

Understanding specific needs of UASC + attempting to secure additional ed. support
Dependent on value professionals involved give to it = process can be beneficial (helps yp understand how doing and give clear objectives/areas for improvement). Can also be a paper exercise.

PEP provides valuable information for all involved to gain greater understanding of difficulties to attempt to improve outcomes.

Initially viewed as 'just another form' but staff appear to welcome the additional info and different perspectives that PEP's bring.

Appear to do it because it is expected of them.

Placed high value on the process – process informative.

Schools unsure of what to expect from PEPs. Teachers appear unaware of their joint responsibilities for completion of PEPs.

Schools appreciate PEPs and co-operate well, acknowledging importance in supporting vulnerable children and assisting them to fulfil potential.

Schools have greater understanding of non-school issues of young people which may impact on education. Schools working more closely with foster carers.

Some schools feel not necessary, i.e. when no high concerns over education. Some schools appreciate written contacts + info on PR, responsibilities for h/w, health, etc.

Schools give impression that PEP is replication of information they already have.

When child is looked after, i.e. foster care schools value PEPs. When young person is in adoptive placement, seen as an intrusion.

If child is not 'a problem' some teachers resent time taken to formulate plan.

Setting realistic targets for young people. DT promoting/championing the case for LAC, thereby promoting corporate parenting role.

8	In general, do you think that the schools you work with are fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities to looked after children?	All	Most	Some	Few	None
		1	3	3	1	
	<p>Please briefly evidence your answer, e.g. how schools are/are not fulfilling this responsibility.</p> <p>Ed. Depts./schools not fulfilling responsibilities to educated UASC who arrive in Year 11</p> <p><i>Some schools good at liaising with S.S. and Connexions workers.</i></p> <p><i>Some not willing to provide information to work in partnership. Can be difficult to access attendance/general progress information. Most contact with schools is when there are difficulties.</i></p> <p>Some schools have not responded to letters, phone calls, etc. for PEP initiation. Understand 'corporate parenting' responsibilities?</p> <p><i>Challenge for some mainstream schools – not so different for special schools who seem more open to protecting/promoting the wellbeing of vulnerable children.</i></p> <p>See it as SSD's responsibility.</p> <p><i>Regular liaison if difficulties arise.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of knowledge/awareness of issues relating to children in care.</i></p> <p><i>Reporting concerns to social worker, liaising with carers about progress.</i></p> <p><i>Acknowledging difficulties in school.</i></p> <p>Some schools appear to view PEPs as time-consuming and replication of other plans, e.g. IEPs. Some schools struggle to see their responsibility towards LA children – don't see their additional needs/responsibilities.</p> <p><i>Some close liaison with SS; some not – staff and time constraints.</i></p> <p><i>Distance of schools also means that SW cannot have as much contact as would like.</i></p> <p>Some schools try not to stigmatise LAC but do not attempt to meet their needs. Regular communication limited. Primary schools can be excellent – partly because smaller and when Headteacher (usually DT) is also on board in terms of meeting needs and understanding difficulties that LAC face.</p> <p><i>Aware of child situation and report effectively to local authority + parents.</i></p> <p>Can be variable – some schools are more open and helpful.</p> <p><i>DT inform SW of progress, attendance, behaviour – not wait until PEP review. Concerns expressed long before crisis.</i></p>					

		YES	NO
9	<p>Have you changed your practice in any way as a result of the Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care (2000)?</p> <p><i>If "Yes" please list up to 3 ways in which it has changed:</i></p> <p><i>Designated Teachers, PEPs.</i></p> <p><i>Guidance has been key to my work (Connexions Advisor). Specific expectations of schools and SSDs to support LA young people. Identified arrangements to assess, plan most appropriate supports within school and home school arrangements.</i></p> <p><i>Supporting young people in education – having regular liaison with school. Promoting young people gaining qualifications. Attempting to ensure that LA status does not disadvantage young people.</i></p> <p><i>Attempt to work more inclusively with Education. Greater dependance on education to manage children in public care. Greater shared knowledge regarding a child's welfare has impacted on the way that our children are being managed more successfully resulted in positive school attendance.</i></p> <p><i>Implement PEPs. More aware/focussed on school outcomes and attendance.</i></p> <p><i>Attend PEP meetings and other relevant school meetings. Access support to assist young person in education.</i></p> <p><i>Indirectly p- changes of policies.</i></p> <p><i>Greater emphasis on PEPs. More regular consultations with school about young person's progress.</i></p> <p><i>More contact with the school – through meetings and telephone. SW has more knowledge of educational achievements of yp worked with.</i></p> <p><i>Education issues have become more integrated in to the statutory review meetings, i.e. linking the PEP and the statutory review form.</i></p> <p><i>Formulation and adherence of PEPs. Ensuring LAC receive an education (e.g. when placement breaks down).</i></p> <p><i>Give more priority to education of looked after children. More aware of need to keep in placement to prevent change of schools.</i></p> <p><i>Ensuring completion/regular review of PEPs for all LA children worked with. Information sharing on 'need to know' basis with DT.</i></p> <p><i>If "No" please state why not:</i></p> <p><i>1 LAC Team worker – "No" but gave no reason.</i></p> <p><i>Other workers from all three teams had only qualified since 2000.</i></p>	1 1 5	1

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Insufficient information
10	Please indicate your responses to the following statements:						
	To effect an improvement to the education of looked after children, Designated Teachers need to be more involved with social work teams.	3 2 3	2 2	1			
	Regular contact should be maintained between Designated Teachers and social workers, rather than just in response to problems.	3 2	3 5	1			
11	The Guidance stated that Designated Teachers should 'champion' the looked after children in schools. In your dealings with Designated Teachers, do they fulfil this responsibility?		All	Most	Some	Few	None
			1 2	1 2 3	1 1		1 1
12	<p>Could you please indicate what changes in processes or practices you think would make a positive difference to the educational experiences of the young people in the care of Shiretown Borough Council?</p> <p><i>Carers/SWs/Advisors being more actively involved in sustaining education placement – review. Celebrate achievement. Constructive challenging when not achieving potential. Regular reporting back and feedback to SWs about progress/difficulties to prevent crisis and make earlier intervention possible. Social workers and teachers listening to young people and acting on it. Admission procedures need revising – cause long and unnecessary delays.</i></p> <p><i>For LA children not to be treated any differently, e.g. 'pity' or 'behaviour problems'. Not to be disadvantaged because they are in care nor for teachers to blame a LA child. It is less threatening to challenge a social worker than an angry parent.</i></p> <p><i>Now talk to Education colleagues and share interest in LAC – previously nobody took responsibility for child's education + professional resentment between two services. Process makes the child 'central' to all roles, regardless of discipline.</i></p> <p><i>Knowledge of who LAC teachers are. Better resourced and more flexible teaching services to young people who are not in school.</i></p> <p><i>Improved communication between school and social worker. Re. role carer should play in support of the child.</i></p> <p><i>Social workers to visit schools more frequently. Teachers to take part in placement reviews.</i></p> <p><i>Support groups within schools for LAC.</i></p> <p><i>More contact between social workers and teachers – not just for an 'incident'/exclusion. Better confidentiality regarding info shared with schools about LAC.</i></p> <p><i>Schools to be more aware of role of Designated Teacher. More involvement between SW and school when children at long distance residential – time constraints.</i></p> <p><i>Greater efficiency in getting PEPs typed up and distributed to relevant parties quickly. Greater collaboration between DTs and social work teams.</i></p> <p><i>Policy that school placements will not be changed due to cost of transport.</i></p> <p><i>Mentoring and extra tutoring should be a major focus because I have seen the impact on some of the cases I have when such provision is made.</i></p>						

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS/EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS
WORKED WITH:

Leaving Care Team	1	8	4					
Disabled Children's Team	9	10	3	8	10			
Looked After Children's Team	4	6	6	11	1	6	9	

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

Leaving Care Team	3
Disabled Children's Team	5
Looked After Children's Team	7

TOTAL: 15

Quantitative data about Shiretown’s cohort of looked after young people, as presented to DfES annually (2001-4)

SATS RESULTS: 2001-2004

	2001	%	2002	%	2003	%	2004	%
YEAR 2								
TOTAL COHORT	4		3		2		10	
Number who sat end KS2 SATs	4	100.0%	3	100.0%	1	50.0%	9	90.0%
Achieved level 2 - Reading task	4	100.0%	1	33.3%	1	50.0%	6	60.0%
Achieved level 2 - Reading comp	4	100.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	5	50.0%
Achieved level 2 - Writing	3	75.0%	1	33.3%			5	50.0%
Achieved level 2 - Spelling	4	100.0%	1	33.3%			2	20.0%
Achieved level 2 - Mathematics	4	100.0%	2	66.6%	1	50.0%	6	60.0%

YEAR 6

TOTAL COHORT	8		7		3		6	
Number who sat end KS3 SATs	4	50.0%	5	71.4%	2	66.7%	3	50.0%
Achieved level 4 - English	4	50.0%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	3	50.0%
Achieved level 4 - Mathematics	3	37.5%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	3	50.0%
Achieved level 4 - Science	4	50.0%	4	57.1%	0	0.0%	3	50.0%

	2001	%	2002	%	2003	%	2004	%
YEAR 9								
TOTAL COHORT	11		13		10		6	
Number who sat end KS4 SATs	3	27.3%	6	46.2%	2	20.0%	5	83.3%
Achieved level 5 - English	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	1	10.0%	2	33.3%
Achieved level 5 - Mathematics	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	66.7%
Achieved level 5 - Science	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	50.0%

GCSE RESULTS: 2001-2004

	2001	%	2002	%	2003	%	2004	%
TOTAL COHORT	8		8		15		14	
Number who sat GCSEs	3	37.50%	3	37.50%	7	46.67%	7	50.00%
1 A*-G	3	37.50%	3	37.50%	7	46.67%	7	50.00%
5 A*-G	2	25.00%	2	25.00%	4	26.67%	5	35.71%
5 A*-C	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	7.14%